YOUR GUIDE TO ENTERING THE TOP UK LAW SCHOOLS

Contents

Preface

So... you think you want to be a lawyer huh? Probably been watching more 'Suits' than your grades would prefer, or maybe you really don't mind sleepless nights in your late twenties. Either way, all roads led you here, and my rather humble (but evidently not too humble) opinion is that you've come to the right place.

Before we get into the content and the purpose of this book, I figured it might be polite and possibly important to first introduce myself and the rationale behind writing this book since it might inform your choice on how to fully utilise it.

I'm a student from Singapore, and studying law has somewhat always been somewhat a dream of mine at a young age. I can't say this desire to be admitted into a prestigious law school wasn't at least partially influenced by finding the occupation of a lawyer at the top of a google search of 'highest paying starting salaries, or the prestige ascribed with being a lawyer, but I can't say it wasn't too influenced by a genuine interest during at internship at a law firm and uncovering a curiosity for it while reading academic material on law. I guess what I mean to say is that career decisions and passions aren't always as discovered as definitely as typically described. Sometimes a convoluted conflation of both pragmatic considerations and academic interest identifies an interest, and there's no shame in admitting that (we are after all, just teenagers trying to decipher a life-long occupation, which is fairly absurd). Anyhow, I went on to apply to Oxford and LSE (London School of Economics and Political Science) to study law in my first application cycle (there's a two-year mandatory conscription in Singapore, so I knew I had two tries from the beginning), and was rejected by both. In my second year, I was accepted by all Oxford, LSE, UCL (University College London), King's College London (KCL), and Durham University.

Rejection the first-time round was... nothing short of tough. To see institutions as unambiguously decorated as Oxford and LSE formally deem me unqualified to study in their institution was akin to an authority sealing that I was simply not good enough. In the intervening year after that, I tried to figure out what exactly I needed to do to be better. I bought and borrowed books, but was consistently disinterested in the content and found it unhelpful. Somehow, all of them felt the imperative need to convince the reader why law is the degree to pursue, always prefacing their explanations of interview techniques and statement advice with sweeping generic statements that was presumably meant to be helpful, but is in fact, anything but. Three hundred odd pages, hours and hours of reading time and hundreds of dollars reduced to complete disuse. Disenchanted, I turned to relying on advice from seniors and peers who managed to get into Oxbridge and LSE, and formulated a study plan of my own.

This book then, is the product of what I've learnt in the intervening year following my first application. Not everyone gets a second chance at trying to get into Oxbridge and the likes, so I believe an accessible and succinct guide should exist as opposed to the superfluous alternatives that are so readily available at the moment. By extension then, the purpose of this book would not be to convince you to do law (after all, you didn't buy this just to convince yourself to read law. You bought this because you want to read law and want to be admitted into a reputable university), this book would solely function to convey as much useful information as possible in getting you into a UK university to read law in the least amount of real estate. Since I'm pretty much using my experience as the sole source of my information, this book would primarily focus on the schools that I'm familiar with, including Oxford, Cambridge LSE, UCL, KCL, Durham, Warwick, Edinburgh etc. Unlike most other books which promise to be an effective guide to entering all courses in all universities, this would solely focus on the admission into studying law in the UK, since I believe and have experienced that generic advice would almost certainly bring you nowhere.

Now, let's go through the sections of the book and how to utilise them. Like many non-fiction books and guide books, not all sections may be relevant to you. You may, of course, choose to read the entire book chronologically, but I feel that the most efficient way to read this book is to firstly read all sections that are relevant to you before the application process begins, and then revisit certain sections when you're actually doing it (eg. reading the personal statement section again while writing it).

The introduction is ironically the section that will most resemble the books that I've criticized since it provides information that you may want, but might not need. I felt it important, catering for those of you out there who are undecided on which university to apply to, to explain how these universities are ranked traditionally, and what you should look out for when making a choice. After all, not everyone is meant for the same university, and for those who unfortunately do not get into your top choice school, understanding where your priorities should lie is an important consideration when choosing from your other choices. Considering that I've taken information from seniors and friends who study at the university, you'll also get an insight into how students there view their university.

If you're applying to Oxbridge, don't miss the 'Admissions Advice for Oxbridge' section where I explain the Collegiate system and how to navigate Oxbridge admissions to your full benefit. There are many tactics that you can use to maximise your possibility of gaining admission, and understanding how the system works is greatly would greatly benefit your ability to capitalize on them. Theories and other rumours regarding the Oxbridge admission system would also be explored.

A breakdown of the components of your application and deadlines are featured in the 'Timeline of your application' section.

The next section, 'Personal Statement', is where I explain what you should and should not include in your statement, and explain what admission officers are looking out for. After analysing the differences between statements that gain admission into Oxbridge and LSE (LSE notoriously being the most fickle and picky of the universities with regards to the personal statement), I'll take you through the process of writing and coming up with main points, and create a cohesive essay with a running narrative. Two paraphrased statements of essays that gained successful admission into LSE and Oxbridge would also be provided, as well as a general structure that you can use.

The 'LNAT' section consists mainly of preparation methods for both the reading comprehension and essay sections. Having once looked all around the internet and in bookstores for LNAT practices, I'll tell you how I managed to increase my LNAT score by 5 points from year-to-year not through putting more effort, but through practicing the right way. I'll tell you where I got all my practices for free, and how you can too (hint: I didn't get better through practicing any of the third party LNAT practice books that I bought).

For the LNAT essay, I explain what I think universities are looking out for and how they grade the essay (since no universal score is given like with the reading comprehension), go through sample questions, and recommend a structure that you should use for all your LNAT essays.

Note that I do not go through the Cambridge Law Test, since I have no experience sitting for that.

The 'Oxbridge Interviews' section is probably the most fun section of the book. I first explain in detail what happens during an Oxbridge Interview (I have had three interviews, so I'm quite familiar with the experience), and what is expected of a good candidate (I was a bad interviewee in my first year, and I'll tell you how not to be one so you'll only need one try). I also recommend various materials online or books that you could read to prepare you for the interview, list plausible interview questions and those that were asked before, and go through in detail some of the possible answers. This would be sure to help you firstly understand how fast you are required to answer, how you should wire your mind to think during the interview, and most importantly how to prepare.

Just a note before we start - I'm not going to pretend that reading this book is all you need to gain admission into a UK law school although I believe it gets you closer to admission than any other book in circulation. The primary purpose of this book is to tell you how to prepare - that implies that effort is needed on your part to practice essays, LNAT papers, and interview questions in the methods that I recommend before any progress can be made, along with any supplementary materials. I understand that different people have different processes, and my recommendations might not work for everyone, but I truly believe that trying them out do not hurt - and if it doesn't work for you, it helps you understand why and cultivate a system of your own that will work for you.

Introduction

Alright. Let's get closer to the real stuff.

↳ Is Law Right for You?

Well… I've got some bad news. If you're genuinely interested in answering this question, you've got the wrong book ☺ But if you truly do wish to test your interest in a career in law, I would say the best possible alternative to doing a full-time internship at a law firm (which might not be too informative if you're just a glorified printer) would be to pick up any legal journal or book that universities let their students read in their first year. An example would be reading HLA Hart's 'The Concept of Law'. Don't expect to understand everything (or anything remotely close to that), but if it doesn't put you to sleep and actually intrigues you, I could say you would probably enjoy reading law.

↳ Comparing the Universities

Okay, this is where it gets slightly complicated and subjective. Different universities attract and are suited for different people, so choosing a university is truly just personal preference.
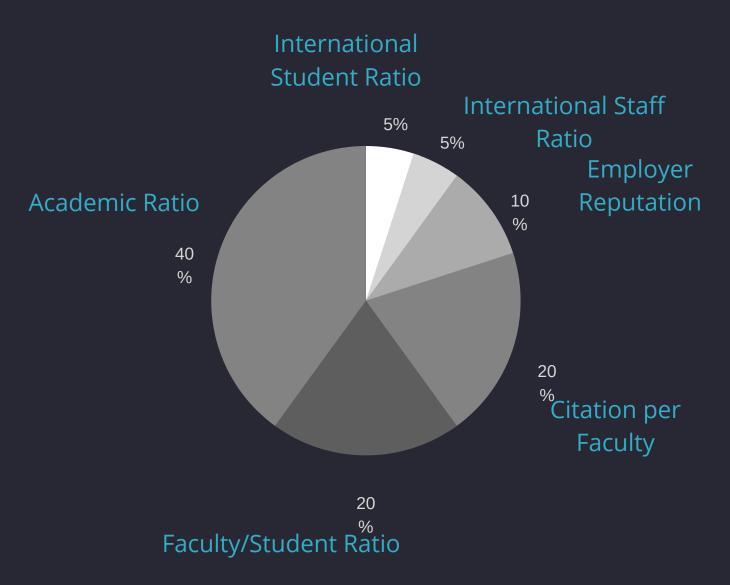
Rankings do a good job in deciphering how the university is perceived publicly, but like with any index, understanding how it's derived would go a long way in clarifying how to most precisely utilise it.

Let's investigate the methodology behind the QS World University rankings with information taken straight from their website.

Take a look at this visualiser I've done up from the information QS provided.

40% of the ranking comprises of Academic Reputation – this is derived from surveys asking academics to rank the top 30 universities with regards to their teaching and research capabilities.

20% of the ranking comprises of the faculty/student ratio. This is fairly simple – although by no means a clear reflection of

International Student Ratio 5%

International Staff Ratio 5%

Employer Reputation 10%

Academic Ratio 40%

Citation per Faculty 20%

Faculty/Student Ratio 20%

the quality of education, a low faculty/student ratio would ensure that students have enough personal supervision by professors. This index coupled with the one above are together a fairly good reflection of teaching quality.

Another 20% of the ranking comprises of Citations per faculty – in essence, the number of times a research paper or journal published by the university is cited. This is where the reality of rankings start to deviate from what is typically perceived. Research capacity is a significant part of the rankings. Although undeniably important especially for those wishing to pursue Masters and post-graduate degrees, the effect of research on teaching quality is further removed than the previous two components. Sure, you could say that it ensures professors have updated knowledge, but this by no means directly correlates with the quality of education received. You could have a university with the best professors who do not conduct any research, and consequently receive a fat zero here.
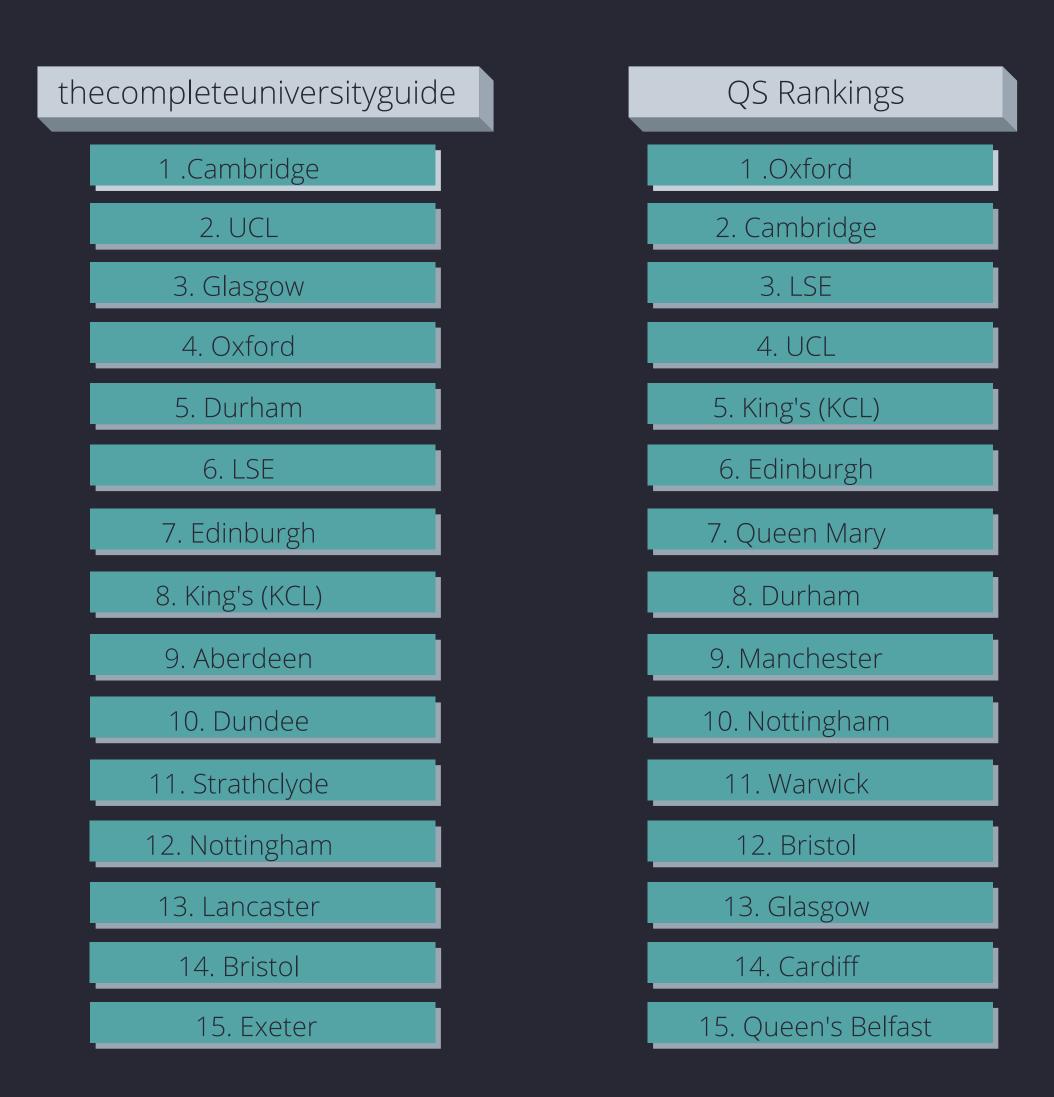
The 10% to employer reputation is perhaps the 10% you want in raw data. But well… they don't release it.

The other 10% goes to diversity. 5% to international student ratio and another 5% to international staff ratio. I don't think any explanation is needed other than diversity = diverse perspectives.

With the rankings explained, I suppose you now have a clearer understanding that university rankings might not mean what you think they do. I would personally say that I could do without the 20% to citations per faculty and the 10% to diversity. University demographics are readily available, and although diversity is definitely important, it would probably be something you've already researched before applying if it did concern you greatly. The 20% for research is cunningly deceptive too. For example, two Singaporean universities are tied for the 11th rank in the QS University Rankings, above Princeton, Cornell, UPenn, Yale and Duke. I'm fairly certain that degrees out of any of the other named universities would still be placed in higher regard that the Singaporean Universities by employers anywhere outside of Singapore or even in Singapore. I'm confident enough to say too that the quality of education in those decorated US schools won't be any lower. That 20% to research and 10% to diversity does a lot of hidden work to shift the rankings.

Rankings though, are not useless. I use rankings mainly to identify which university has a reputable name with employers. The effect of these rankings too cannot be understated. The higher a university is on such rankings, the more employers would be inclined to employ students from the university. It's a self-perpetuating cycle that continually ensures the relevance of rankings.

These are the current rankings for UK universities in Law (latest rankings as of early 2020):

thecompleteuniversityguide	QS Rankings
1 .Cambridge	1 .Oxford
2. UCL	2. Cambridge
3. Glasgow	3. LSE
4. Oxford	4. UCL
5. Durham	5. King's (KCL)
6. LSE	6. Edinburgh
7. Edinburgh	7. Queen Mary
8. King's (KCL)	8. Durham
9. Aberdeen	9. Manchester
10. Dundee	10. Nottingham
11. Strathclyde	11. Warwick
12. Nottingham	12. Bristol
13. Lancaster	13. Glasgow
14. Bristol	14. Cardiff
15. Exeter	15. Queen's Belfast

Times Higher Education	Guardian Rankings
1 .Oxford	1 .Cambridge
2. Cambridge	2. Oxford
3. UCL	3. UCL
4. LSE	4. Dundee
5. Edinburgh	5. Solent
6. King's (KCL)	6. Glasgow
7. Manchester	7. Durham
8. Warwick	8. Cumbria
9. Bristol	9. Aberdeen
10. Glasgow	10. LSE
11. Queen Mary	11. London South Bank
12. Burmingham	12. King's (KCL)
13. Sheffield	13. Leeds
14. Southampton	14. Abertay
15. York	15. Edinbrugh

Evidently, not all rankings agree. A safe bet though, would be the schools that consistently appear in those rankings. Oxbridge of course, would undoubtedly lead the field. LSE, UCL and King's consistently appear on the next tier, right below Oxbridge. Durham, Warwick, Edinburgh and Glasglow come right after that, sometimes even challenging those second-tier schools in some rankings but falling off some others.

↳ <u>Researching the Difference between Universities</u>

Well... since we've established rankings are not exhaustive or definitive indicators in deciphering the merit of the university (but should mainly be used as a gauge for employer reputation), now it's time to get back to the good old-fashioned research.

Priorities are different for different people. Some may prefer to have a focus on different aspects of law (International law, European law etc.) or prefer to study law in conjunction with other subjects. I won't profess to know every permutation and preference there is, but here is a list of preferences I considered before making a choice:

(1) Employer Reputation

Law is a fairly practical degree, and pragmatism is naturally forward looking. I wanted to study at a university that actually gives me a fair shot at being employed at a big Law firm. As aforementioned, rankings are a good indicator, but if you do know of any family friends/friends working at a law firm, asking them how their firm makes employment decisions would help greatly too.

(2) Student Population

I wanted my experience in university to be nothing short of challenging, and I feel that besides having reputable and knowledgeable professors, what would push you to be even better is the quality of students. If everyone there is achieving their dream and would work invariably hard to achieve it, you would too. For this, I assumed that the harder the school is to get in, the higher the quality of the students - I looked then to admission requirements.

(3) Quality of Professors

This one is obvious. Rankings as well as speaking to students from universities really help with identifying which university has the most engaging and knowledgeable professors. Willingness and ability to teach shouldn't be ignored either - some professors may be the smartest in the world, but unable to convey that information to you. What's the use of that then?

(4) Location

University is not all about studying. If you're from a city and prefer a taste of rural life, choose university-town like Durham, Oxford, Cambridge, Warwick etc. If you prefer the lights of a city, London is the place for you.

(5) Modules

Learning what you like about Law is nonetheless important despite being so low down my list. Most schools have roughly the same modules, but subtle differences may affect your decision too.

What I know about the different Universities

My knowledge of the different universities are listed here. Note that most of this information are either gathered from friends who attend these universities and online research, so they are by no means 100% accurate, but do indicate what some students and the online community think of these universities.

Comparing Oxford and Cambridge

	Oxford	Cambridge
Degree	BA in Jurisprudence – the main difference between the schools lie here. Jurisprudence is the theory of law, so you'll be learning mostly the nature of law, legal institutions and legal theory. Although it's packaged as the philosophy of law, there really isn't much of a difference between this and an LLB – it's just packaged as a different focus. Nottingham is the other university of note that offers a BA in Jurisprudence rather than an LLB.	Legum Baccalaureus (LLB) - the usual degree offered by most other universities. It includes both the study of its theory, but mainly its practice and use.
Location	Oxford is a university town in a city. There's generally more of a city vibe than in Cambridge. There's a mall near the city centre, and a fair number of people walking around in the city who are not involved in university activities. Residential houses are plentiful around the periphery of the school. There are restaurants, pubs, sports bars, clubs, theatres, cinemas etc all around. Not everything revolves around Oxford in Oxford.	The consensus is that Cambridge feels more rural than Oxford. Less people walking around in the day, quiet areas which are peaceful for intellectual contemplation, and most people around are university folks. There are malls and shopping centres nearby though, but less bars, pubs, clubs etc. The terrain too is generally hillier than Oxford.
Entry Requirements	A Levels: AAA Advanced Higher: AAB or AA with an additional Higher at grade A IB: 38 points (including core points) with 666 at HL Requires LNAT and an interview	A Levels: A*AA or AAA for countries without A* IB: 40 points (including core points) with 776 at HL Requires a Cambridge Law test and interview

Admiss-ion Statistics	(includes Law with Studies in Europe) 2018 Applicants: 2,846 2018 Offers: 541	2018 Applicants: 1,357 2018 Offers: 269
Lodging	Varies between Colleges, but all offer first year accommodation at the least. Most offer first and last year accommodation and some for all three years. To my knowledge, it is not mandatory to stay in Oxford if you don't wish to.	Accommodation for all three years is provided and all students are 'expected' to stay there for three years.

And that pretty much are the main differences between Oxford and Cambridge Law. Teaching quality and the tutorial formats are fairly similar, thus it was not mentioned. Cambridge has tougher entry requirements, but both universities have about the same intake considering that the Law with Studies in Europe is fairly sizable in Oxford. (the 3-year average intake for Jurisprudence given on the Oxford website is 191, which excludes offers that did not meet the entry requirements).

Comparing Oxbridge and the London Schools

	Oxbridge	LSE, UCL, KCL
Location	Stated above.	London is more vibrant, happening, and plainly more fun than Oxford or Cambridge. London schools however, are often located quite sparsely – there is no central campus where everything is located together. Some faculties may be a few train stations away from others, so transport cost and time have to be considered. In London, there are plenty of reasons to be out till late, but the city might not be too safe at night (not that Oxford or Cambridge are terribly safe either, but generally safer).
Lodging	Stated above.	London schools typically only offer optional first year accommodation. Rooms are smaller and further away from the school than in Oxbridge. Students are expected to look for their own accommodation after the first year, although there are few exceptions that allow students to stay for more than a year in the school's accommodation.
Speakers	Oxbridge attracts a myriad of decorated speakers from all over the world and across all disciplines.	Well... LSE and UCL are known to attract great speakers. Centrally located in London, it is much more convenient for politicians, businessmen and industry leaders to speak at their convenience. King's too attracts such speakers, but less frequently than LSE and UCL.

Collegiate System	Oxbridge offers a Collegiate system, where you'll apply to a specific college within the university during the application process. Tutorials, lodging, meals and social activities would be held in these colleges, encouraging a small and tightly-knit social circle	The London Schools don't feature Colleges. They have the same system as most other universities; you're allocated to a faculty dependent on your course and are free to join any interest group/sports that you desire. Lodging is based on neither of these.
Tutorial Format	With the unique Collegiate System comes a unique tutorial format. Oxbridge is famous for having just 2 to 3 students in each tutorial where professors get deeply involved in the learning process and challenge students on their thoughts regularly.	Most other schools - even if they do have a collegiate system - will not have the intimacy of an Oxbridge tutorial format. The London Schools have tutorials anywhere from 5-30 students like most other universities.

Okay… here is where it gets a little contentious and subjective. I've heard these things from friends studying in these schools, but usually of course, everyone has different opinions and standards.

Comparing LSE, UCL and King's (KCL)

	LSE	UCL	KCL
Employer Reputation	Employer reputation (both internationally and in the UK) is quite clearly in this sequence: LSE, UCL, King's. LSE law has always been viewed just slightly below that of Oxbridge, with students typically described as more corporate than their Oxbridge peers. UCL comes in after LSE, and King's after UCL.		
Academic Reputation	Ok… I've heard different things from different people here. Some say LSE's teaching isn't as good as UCL's, and some UCL students say their LSE law friends would always request for their notes to be shared with them as the LSE notes are unsatisfactory. Such rumours propagate the widely-recognised theory that LSE is highly ranked mainly for its research rather than the quality of teaching. I can't find LSE student though, that would say UCL is any better than them, and employers seem to continually favour LSE students.		Generally perceived to be a notch below LSE and UCL. As is routine though, ask any King's student and he/she will be sure to dispel this notion.
Admission Require-ments	A Levels: A*AA IB: 38 points with 766 at HL	A Levels: A*AA IB: 39 points with a score of more than 19 points for all three HLs, with no score lower than 5.	A Levels: A*AA IB: 35 points including 766 at HL

I'll elaborate a bit more on a few more schools before moving on:

Durham

Although Durham does not have the international reputation of Oxbridge or the London Schools, Durham has a great reputation within the UK, and is starting to be more recognised internationally.

The teaching quality is known to rival that of LSE, UCL and KCL's, occasionally even bettering them in the rankings. Some Durham Students even coin the new portmanteau Doxbridge to refer to Durham, Cambridge and Oxford with parity. Although the rankings would not agree, this is a clear indication that Durham is a school with great teaching, and could gain more recognition in the future.

Durham though, is located fairly far away from London, and is Cambridge-level rural. Naturally, without the name recognition of Oxbridge, Durham attracts far fewer speakers and guests than Oxbridge and the London schools.

Durham too features a collegiate system similar to that of Oxbridge, further emphasizing their similarity.

Durham requires you to take the LNAT, and requires an A level score of A*AA and IB Score of 38 for admission.

Edinburgh

You're going to see a trend here - I'm not going to say anything terrible about any university, since none of them are terrible.

Edinburgh is widely recognised as one of the best non-London, non-Oxbridge law schools. You would find it consistently in the top 10 in most rankings, sometimes even edging out one of the familiar names. This is for good reason - the professors are said to be excellent and certainly amongst the best in all of Scotland. Contrary to what it's age might imply, Edinburgh is also said to be at the forefront of mordenising education for students, as opposed to the traditionalism that Oxbridge preserves.

Located in the city of Edinburgh, the university is beautiful and social activities aplenty.

Durham does not require any additional assessments (no LNAT), and requires an A level score of ABB and IB Score of 34 for admission.

Warwick

The law schools of Warwick, Durham and Edinburgh are often mentioned in tandem. Edinburgh and Durham usually have the upper hand in name recognition in that order, but Warwick doesn't fall too far behind either. Students say that the professors at Warwick are very responsive and involved in the learning process, and the rural location adds to learning experience.

Warwick too does not require any additional assessments (no LNAT), and requires an A level score of AAA and IB Score of 38 for admission.

↳ Components of your Application

Now we're back to talking about all universities. For non-Oxbridge universities, the facets of your application are:

1   **UCAS and Personal Statement**

2   **LNAT**

3   **Teacher's Reccomendation**

Try to find a teacher who can write well (humanities teachers are a safe bet), and who you know with certainty will write you a good recommendation. A teacher who has studied in the university you're applying to never hurts either - it's basically an alumni endorsement.

4   **Results**

For Oxbridge, the only difference is an additional interview:

5   **Interview**

Points 3 and 4 are things that this book isn't concerned with.

The UCAS Personal Statements, LNAT and Oxbridge interviews have a section of their own in the coming pages.
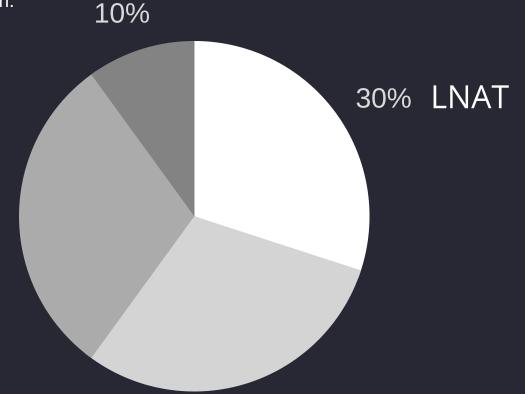
▶ Weighing your Application

Before delving into the main sections though, let's first go through the logic behind how universities will probably weigh your application so you understand what to foucs on:

Teacher's Reccomendation

As long as it doesn't raise any red flags, I think the teacher's recommendation won't do much in affecting the admission office's decision.

10%

30%   LNAT

Personal Statement   30%

For most universities, the UCAS personal statement is the most direct interaction the university will have with you. They'll use this to decipher whether you're a good fit for their university, and if you show enough interest in your course to complete it

30%   Academic Results

Note on Sample:

Thank you very much for reading a sample of the book! Hope that it has been of use to you, regardless if you do choose to purchase the entire book or not.

Just a quick note regarding the sample: the preface and contents page do give a snippet of what is to be covered in the book. As mentioned in the preface, the introduction is detailed, but unlike what will be given in the sections to follow - it provides information that you might want, but might not need, unlike with the Personal Statement, LNAT and Oxbridge interview sections.

For this sample, I decided to add in Page 14 as a prelude to give a little taste as to what will be covered in the following sections. As the book progresses, it will be more focused and detailed as page 14 alludes to. We will use admission statistics to formulate the best tactics to gain admission into Oxbridge, formulate ideas and structures on how to write a truthful yet convincing personal statement, find out how best to practice LNAT Multiple Choice questions and structure LNAT essays, and come up with a battle plan on how to tackle the Oxbridge interviews.

If you do find the information in this sample informative, or are intrigued and do not mind my writing style and propensity to be straightforward, do consider purchasing the book.

If not, thank you again for reading this sample! Wishing you all the best in your application.