KEBLE AT LARGE

**ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY**

APPLICATION GUIDE

https://lh4.googleusercontent.com/cgzbTaKLX_mVSRL6gGJBvo9U4X4q9P4XBYsW-NO5eVS3aLlOxbmBf0TzrcFk98oARnTGozjkO7i7gTXLWCA6c3Sfq5qbCU0xIhkh8zhw6Y-6qyLOFzUwJlN7hXxYzm7KErsN2W-2

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| **Deadline for applying through UCAS** | **15th October 2016** |
| **A-Level requirements** | **AAA**  A background of studying both arts and science subjects can be helpful, but there are no actual subject requirements |
| **Aptitude test?** | **Nope** |
| **Course length** | **3 years** |
| **Qualification** | **A BA in Archaeology and Anthropology** |

**UCAS Application**

* Every application to university starts with UCAS: applying to Oxford for any subject has an earlier deadline than other universities, but it is key to remember any medical school application has this early deadline too!
* Your teacher will submit references about you, this is important encouragement to make sure you’re conscientious and hard working- although some may dismiss these references and their importance, they were brought up in my Keble interview, therefore they do get read. Although you shouldn’t worry too much as your teachers should hopefully be saying positive things about you!
* All your academic and extracurricular achievements get entered into UCAS, guidelines and statistics regarding the academic requirements for an application to the university can be found here: <http://www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/study/medicine/pre-clinical/statistics>
* This website gives detailed information about past applicants and their percentage of A\* at GCSE and their scores in entrance exams, it is important to remember however that academic scores are considered in light of your school’s performance, for example, GCSE performance that outperforms the average from your school will be flagged up even if you have a lower number of A\*s than other applicants.
* Therefore, there is no specific GCSE grade requirement for an Oxford place, although all applicants must meet an: AAA offer at A level.

**Work Experience/the ‘right’ A levels**

* When you’re applying for Arch and Anth, always bear in mind one thing: they don’t expect you to know anything! This should be a fairly liberating thought (not, unfortunately, because it means you can do no work….) because it gives you freedom in choosing what areas to show interest in, and knowledge about. Given that most people don’t have an Archaeology or Anthropology A level, they can’t expect you to have a broad knowledge base (having said that, you want to gain some breadth of understanding - see ‘Reading’ section). This is where work experience can come in handy: try and find a local archaeological dig that maybe you can help with at weekends; or volunteer at your local museum; enter a History essay competition on a question that’s more anthropological (yes, not quite work experience, but still work right?). The point is, you’re giving the person reading your personal statement solid evidence that you’re interested, and you’re giving yourself something comfortable to talk about at interview. BUT don’t panic if you don’t manage to find work experience. Much of your interest also comes across through reading.

**Personal Statement**

* Writing a personal statement is probably the hardest part of your application, you can ask around for structures and you will see huge variety in what different people put, it is important to realise there is no formula to the perfect personal statement, it is personal and is used to show your interest in the subject and your personality.
* DO NOT spend hours trawling through the student room reading about the amazing achievements of people who have supposedly got into Oxford, a lot of these are false and it’s important to make sure you’re talking about you, not someone else!
* You should read up in detail about the course, as courses vary hugely from university to university and not every course is suited to everybody, make sure you’re applying to places with a course structure you would enjoy. Particularly with the Oxford course, remember that it’s fairly equally distributed between Arch and Anth, so you won’t ever be able to specialise entirely in one or the other, or ditch one, at BA level.
* Your personal statement could include: motivation behind your choice to study Archaeology and Anthropology, reference to particular aspects of your A level courses that you enjoy/that may be relevant to Arch and Anth, your extra reading (perhaps most importantly), relevant work experience/volunteering, and a little about extracurricular activities as well (but don’t spend too long on this – yes, they want to know you’re an interesting person; they want to know you can balance various commitments. But, honestly, the person teaching you about Human Evolution wants to know less about how much you love gymnastics, and more about why you like (or want to know more about) human skulls from a million years ago).
* Remember what ‘Archaeology and Anthropology’ is. It’s ultimately the study of people, past and present. The professors you’re applying to LOVE this stuff, and all they want to do is to find someone who shares their interests, and wants to talk about them. So give them something to chat with you about. Did you go on a school trip to the British Museum and wonder where all the ‘boring’ pots not on display were? Did you wonder what they were used for as opposed to the fabulously decorated ones on display? Have you studied chimpanzee behaviour in biology, or seen them on Discovery Channel, and thought WOW they’re so similar to us in some ways. Tell them in your Personal Statement, and then tell them what book you read to help you answer the questions that arose from these ideas.
* Maybe the most important thing to remember, though, is DON’T LIE. You’ll look sillier if you can’t answer a question at interview on a book you claimed to have read on your personal statement, than if you haven’t read it at all (remember that thing I said at the beginning? They’re not *expecting* any specific knowledge). If you’ve read a chapter, that’s great! Say so. It might be a super long book (Malinowski is a famous anthropologist, for example, but his books are ENDLESS, and also somewhat outdated – you want to economise your time here. Is it worth reading all 500 pages? Read the long and informative introduction, or chapter one, maybe…?), and the professors know it. Just make sure you can talk about what you *do* claim to have read.

**Recommendations for Reading**

* My policy for interview reading was 40% breadth, 30% one area of interest, 30% another area of interest. How did I find these areas of interest? One came out of some work experience I did (landscape archaeology, I know, I know… BORING but I quite like it), and the other I was just curious about (anthropology of identity – a very very broad area in itself, but very interesting). Try and identify an area – dip into one of the big textbooks (Renfrew and Bahn, *Archaeology: Theory, methods and practice*; Chris Scarre, *the Human Past*; Joy Hendry, *an introduction to Social Anthropology*; ‘A very short introduction’ to Archaeology, and to Social and Cultural Anthropology) and when something looks like it might interest you, check out the bibliography/extra reading for that section of the textbook for a detailed book on it, or google the area, and try and read a book on it. It doesn’t even have to be a whole book – it could be a scholarly article too (your school might have access to JSTOR to access the more obscure ones, but lots are also free online).
* So that’s the niche stuff…. In terms of ‘breadth’, I’d say read at least one small ‘introduction’ to Archaeology and one to Anthropology. Google the stuff you’re confused about or interested in; warily read Wikipedia and random websites, being careful that they’re not sites making things up as they go… This more broad information you don’t necessarily want to be writing on your personal statement unless you know the content very well, but it will all come in useful when they ask you strange, straaange questions at interview.
* Keep up to date with the general news. They like to ask you about questions relevant to today’s society at interview. For example, if you told them that you were interested in the idea that identity was fluid depending on context (i.e. If I’m half Italian and half English by birth, and I’m on holiday in Italy, I might find myself feeling more English when I’m in Italy simply because I feel less Italian than the people around me; but when I’m in England, I might feel less English and more Italian because I feel more ‘different’ to people who consider themselves entirely English.), they might ask you how you thought Brexit might impact the identity of a European immigrant who had begun to feel more ‘British’ after living for many years in London – do they feel unwelcome now that a large part of the population has voted on wanting to leave the European Union, and does this make them feel less ‘British’? Basically, a general awareness of what’s going on around the world, and forming your own opinions on these things, will stand you in a great position for Anthropology questions.
* There is no recipe for what you should read, the tutors are looking for a genuine interest in extending your understanding, it doesn’t matter what specific area this may be in, there is no need to research what the tutors at Keble study, they are not expecting you to know about their research.
* Some books to get you started:
  + Monaghan, J. & Just, P., *Social & Cultural Anthropology: a very short introduction* [read this and the one below as quick starters just to get a taste for what you’re dealing with, and a little background knowledge]
  + Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: a very short introduction*
  + Renfrew and Bahn, *Archaeology: Theory, methods and practice* [this and the next are big textbooks to dip into for reference and background]
  + Chris Scarre,*the Human Past*
  + *J*oy Hendry, *an introduction to Social Anthropology* [much more detailed introduction to anthropology]
  + Nigel Barley, *the innocent anthropologist* [an easy first *ethnography* (anthropological account) to read]
  + Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel* [good basic understanding of how the world came to be as it is in terms of the rise and fall of civilizations, and the prosperity of some as opposed to others; the origins of agriculture – BUT not highly regarded by most archaeologists as Diamond is a geographer/scientist]
  + Gamble, C., *Archaeology: The Basics* [ a good introduction to how archaeologists go about finding out the things they do]
* If your application passes the first round, you will be invited to interview at the University.
* For Arch and Anth, you will be interviewed at two colleges, the one you applied to, and one randomly assigned college.
* Most colleges will give you two interviews, with different tutors, these may be on the same day or spread across a period of time- you’ll be given a room to stay in for the duration of your stay.
* For the interview make sure you go over your personal statement and ensure you’re up to date with everything you said you have read/enjoy, you can expect tutors to pick out very random points from your personal statement and make you elaborate on them. So make sure you know it!!! They want to start with some easy questions you’re comfortable with, to ease you in to your full potential. So, make sure that questions about your personal statement can be exactly that – ones that you can answer with confidence. They’re also very good at asking you things you’d never considered about the things you’ve written, so try and think of as many questions as you can that might be sparked from what you’ve said. E.g. if you write that ‘after reading Marcel Mauss’ book *the gift*, I was interested in the idea that there is no such thing as a free gift’ - they might ask you: 1. So what is the driving force behind a gift? 2. What about a gift from father to son, is that not ‘free’? 3. Do you think this is the case in every culture, and through the ages? 4. If gifts aren’t free, what’s the point of paying for anything? And so on…
* Archaeology and Anthropology is a subject that requires you to ‘think outside of the box’, so be prepared for a wide variety of questions, and for ones that might surprise you. Don’t panic if they hand you an object and ask you about it – they just want to see how you think. Does it resemble an object you know? Could you be falling into a trap by assuming that is has the same function as an object it resembles? What might it be used for?
* On the day, many candidates may be dressed in quite a relaxed manner, as Oxford encourages applicants to dress comfortably. However, do not feel embarrassed about wearing a suit or a smart skirt and shirt: you want to look like you’re taking the interview seriously, and you should do this however you like. To play it safe, chinos and shirt, or a neat dress are a fairly good bet in my opinion. The key advice in terms of what to wear, is to make sure you present the best version of yourself.

**Further Questions?**

If you have any further questions, please don’t hesitate to e-mail Keble at Large at kebleatlarge@outlook.com