KEBLE AT LARGE

**BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

APPLICATION GUIDE

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| **Deadline for applying through UCAS** | **15th October 2016** |
| **A-Level requirements** | **A\*AA**  *(Excluding Critical Thinking and General Studies) taken in one academic year, with the A\* in a Science or a Mathematics Biology/Human Biology at A-Level (or equivalent higher qualifications) is normally required.* |
| **Aptitude test?** | **No** |
| **Course length** | **3 years** |
| **Qualification** | **A BA Biological Sciences** |

**Applying through UCAS**

* All applications to Oxford must be done through UCAS- do remember that applications for Oxbridge must be submitted by an earlier deadline
* Your teachers will submit a reference- this will aim to show you off in the best light, listing your achievements and personal qualities. Do not worry about the reference- you will not be able to read your reference but your teachers will always write them in the most positive way. However it is important to make sure that your reference and your own personal statements do match up: for example, if your teacher writes that you are interested in a particular area of biology, make sure that this is actually correct as you could get asked about it in an interview.
* On your UCAS application form you will be able to list all of your qualifications, including academic grades (GCSE scores) as well as non academic qualifications (music exams). If you are short of space on your personal statement do remember that any qualifications (e.g DofE) you have can be put on your UCAS form and so if you choose to omit these from your personal statement the universities you apply to can still see that you have done them.
* There are no set GCSE requirements for Oxford, you just have to achieve the offer of A\*AA. However, tutors will take your GCSE and predicted grades into account when choosing applicants
* 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

**The Personal Statement**

* Your personal statement is a short piece of writing which should explain a) why you want to study Biology and b) why you would make a great Biology student
* There is no set structure for a personal statement, nor is there a set list of things you must include in it. Do not spend lots of time looking a other people’s personal statement- the emphasis is on the word ‘personal’. Your statement should be unique to you.
* Do not be afraid to show off- universities will want to hear why you are a great student!
* If you have work experience that is relevant to Biology then it would be great to mention it. However, work experience is not required in any way so don’t worry if you haven’t been able to do any.
* You should list some things that show that you are really enthusiastic about Biology- maybe some books or articles that you have read, or a talk that you have been to, a documentary you have watched: it really can be anything. Tutors want to know that you are really self motivated, so anything that you have done outside of school or organised yourself is great to include.
* Don’t try and mention too many books or articles- it is best to include one or two in good detail than to just list the books you have read. You must explain why, for example, how reading a particular book has made you want to study Biology. Do not lie about books you have read- it is very likely that tutors will ask you about them in an interview.
* You may want to list extra-curricular achievements but I would advise to only use a very small section of your personal statement to do this. Tutors are more interested in your interest and aptitude for the subject so don’t be offended if they ignore these achievements in interview.

**Reading Recommendations**

* I would recommend keeping up to date with recent scientific studies- magazines such as New Scientist and National Geographic are great for this. Tutors won’t test you on it but it’s great to have as much knowledge as possible as you will have more to talk about in an interview- it also shows that you are really interested in the subject!
* Scientific documentaries are also great to watch- BBC Horizon often has relevant TV shows.
* Don’t try and read anything too complicated- it is better to understand a less advance concept in greater detail. There are also no specific requirements in terms of reading – the books can be as niche or broad as you like.
* A few suggestions for books to get you started: How we live and why we die: the secret lives of cells, Lewis Wolpert; The Animal Kingdom: A very short introduction, Peter Holland; Endless Forms Most Beautiful, Sean B. Carrol; Reaching for the Sun, J King; The Epigenetic Revolution, Nessa Carey; The Blind Watchmaker, Richard Dawkins. The ‘Short Introduction’ series are also great to read and include topics such as Evolution, Plants ect.

**The Interview**

* For Biological Sciences most (roughly 2/3) of applicants will be invited to interview. In your interview there will usually be two people, who will take it in turns to ask questions.
* For Biology, you will have two interviews. The first will be at the college you applied to and the second will be at another college, which is randomly allocated. This is to give you two chances at a good interview, as well as making sure that tutors are judging each applicant the same at every college. These may be on the same day or on different days so you will be given a room in college to stay at for the duration of your interviews.
* The interviews can really take any format. What is important to remember is that tutors will try and make sure that you will not be able to revise for the interview. They will introduce new concepts and ideas that you wont have come across before. Therefore extensive interview practise and preparation may not give any candidate an advantage. Tutors will not try and ask trick questions- they really do want to get the best out of every applicant.
* In most interviews, tutors will begin by asking about your personal statement- this is more to put you at ease, so you can start by talking about something that you know well. In Biology interviews, you may be shown a scientific object, a picture or some data- you will then be asked questions based around this. You may be asked about how you would design a particular experiment, or how you could test a particular idea.
* You can wear whatever you like to the interview- tutors are not looking for you to be well presented, or have great interview skills or be really charismatic. What is important is that you are comfortable and can be yourself.
* In terms of preparation, it is key to make sure that you know everything that you have mentioned in your personal statement. Tutors will have designed the interviews so that you can’t ‘revise’ for them, so do not stress about doing a lot of work beforehand!

**Further Questions?**

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