KEBLE AT LARGE

**History**

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**  *(Excluding Critical Thinking and General Studies) taken in one academic year. History A level is strongly advised.* |
| **Aptitude test?** | **Yes – The HAT** |
| **Course length** | **3 years** |
| **Qualification** | **BA History** |

**UCAS Application**

* Every application to university starts with UCAS: applying to Oxford for any subject has an earlier deadline than other universities – make sure you make your application before the deadline has passed.
* 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: https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses-listing/history
* 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.
* Something to keep in mind is the existence of the ‘joint honours’ degrees. Within the History Faculty there are several other degrees:

**Ancient and Modern History** allows you to study ancient history papers usually restricted to the classics faculty, allowing you to study a mix of Roman and Greek history alongside your more ‘modern’ papers – there is also the option to study Latin and Greek papers, regardless of whether you’ve learnt either before.

**History and Politics** involves studying half of the full history course, as well as options in politics, which are generally the same as those available to PPE students. This allows for a large degree of flexibility, particularly in second and third year. It is important to note that in your first year you will take a paper in Political Statistics, or ‘Q-step’, which requires some work in statistical analysis.

**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 interests, achievements and importantly your personality in your application.
* DO NOT spend hours trawling through the student room reading about the amazing achievements of egotistical narcissists, a lot of these are false and it’s important to make sure you’re talking about you, not someone else!
* Whilst the personal statement is about you, in order to help your application, it is good to read up on what each university wants to see from applicants, this can then be used as a potential structure. Often universities publish the key attributes they want a potential student to demonstrate on their admissions pages online.
* In addition to this, you should read up in detail about the course, as History is taught very differently across different universities. The Oxford course tends to offer quite a lot of choice, with no ‘compulsory papers’ other than Approaches or Historiography, or ‘Disciplines of History’, all of which cover the practice of writing history. Students of History have to cover at least one paper of Medieval History, one paper of Early Modern history, and one Modern history paper; there is quite a focus on British history, however the university is improving its curriculum of Global history papers.
* Oxbridge admissions tutors expect a high degree of academic interest from applicants, so it is important that you demonstrate this in your personal statement. A good starting point will be your A level course, but it is important to prove that you have taken your interests outside of the classroom. If there is a subject that you learn in school that particularly interests you, ask your teacher how you can take this subject further. This ‘supra-curricular’ reading will stand you in great stead on your personal statement, particularly if you examine the historiographical background of various authors.
* Other universities focus more on the personal characteristics of their applicants, for example, placing far more emphasis on volunteering and demonstrating a variety of positions of authority within your school. Whilst Oxford also still looks for these characteristics, they are looking for you to demonstrate a real passion for history on top of this.

**Recommendations for Reading**

* Try and identify an area of your studies that you feel passionately about, then try and find a few different historians that have written about this topic. Successful applicants tend to understand the way that there aren’t any ‘final answers’ in history, but rather an ongoing debate with different evidence being used in different way.
* Keep up to date with the general news, particularly politics and international relations. Whilst historians might seem to be locked away in the past, many interviewers will be interested to see how your understanding of the past feeds into your understanding of the present.
* Being able to engage with your reading, not simply taking historical arguments as gospel, but rather questioning the veracity of the claims and points made in a book, and comparing them to other articles or perspectives you’ve encountered will be very important in your personal statement and at interview. Think critically about what an author is saying, ask questions about their underlying motives, their political or national background, whether they conform to a certain ‘school’ of historical writing.
* As well as further reading within specific subject areas, it will also be useful to get some background understanding of the debates within historical practice. Recommended introductory reading could include: ‘What is History’ EH Carr, ‘In defence of History’ Richard Evans, ‘The Practice of History’ GR Elton, ‘What is History Now?’ David Cannadine.
* 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.

**Aptitude Test**

* To make an application to Oxford for History, you will need to sit the History Aptitude Test, or HAT – the deadline for application to this changes each year, but it will happen between your UCAS application deadline (mid-September) and your interview (December).
* http://www.admissionstestingservice.org/for-test-takers/hat/how-to-register/
* The History Aptitude Test is designed to test fundamental historical skills, your ability to handle sources and make comprehensive arguments. The first two sections are based entirely on sources, and thus rely on your ability to understand them, and make certain assertions about what they might mean – what we can learn from them about their historical context. The final section of the paper relies on your own knowledge – there will be a very general historical question, about a process or a concept, and you will be asked to apply it to an area you have studied, and write a short essay.
* Try all the Past Papers to get a feel for what they are assessing, these can be found here: http://www.history.ox.ac.uk/history-aptitude-test-hat
* Make sure you keep a cool head during the exam and just try to answer every question as fully as you can. Do not worry if the sources are completely detached from anything you’ve ever studied before, they are looking for proof of analytical ability, rather than copious specific knowledge.
* It is important to also be aware of the written work that you need to submit – this varies slightly across the various joint honours degrees, but all of the requirements and deadlines are to be found here - <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses-listing/history?wssl=1> - this should be written work, undertaken as part of your studies and marked by a teacher. Make sure you brush up on the argument and evidence in this essay before interview, as tutors will sometimes base entire interviews around these pieces of submitted work

**Interview**

* If your application passes the first round, you will be invited to interview at the University. When you apply to the university you will either apply to a specific college, or make an open application to all colleges. When you are invited to interview, you will be primarily interviewed by a specific college, where you will stay in student accommodation for the duration of your interview.
* 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. Similarly, tutors may well have your submitted work with them, and might ask you specific questions about these essays. Tutors might also give you articles or sources before you arrive at the interview. Do not panic if you aren’t familiar with the period in the source – reapply some of the skills from the aptitude test, ask questions and make sensible guesses about who might have written the source, or what it can tell us about the society that produced it.
* The most important thing to remember is that tutors are looking to push you, so do not panic if you find yourself struggling to remember a piece of evidence, or an argument, or are unfamiliar with the subject at hand. Ultimately they are not trying to catch you out, but trying to understand how you learn, and how suited you would be to the style of teaching offered at Oxford.
* On the day, many candidates may be dressed in quite a relaxed manner, as Oxford encourages applicants to dress comfortably. Some people might also be dressed more formally, there is zero correlation between outfit and chance of getting an offer. Wearing the wrong thing will not affect your chances of getting a place!

**What to Expect at university**

* History is taught through the tutorial system, which means weekly hour long sessions with an expert academic, with assessed essays being handed in at each of these meetings.
* However, whilst you will be handing in a large number of essays over the course of your degree, your final grades are purely based on your final examinations and your thesis.
* The thesis is a 12,000 word piece of original research, answering a question on any subject of your choosing, requiring you to work with primary sources which have never been used by a historian before.

**Further Questions?**

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