



[www.ox.ac.uk/study](http://www.ox.ac.uk/study)

# A guide to Oxford for American students

Oxford is consistently ranked one of the world's top five universities, and number one in the UK.

Oxford offers excellent resources, many of which are accessible to undergraduate students and not reserved for graduate students or professors as they may be at other institutions. The tutorial system is a speciality of Oxford, where students spend time with experts every week of their course.

Oxford is also renowned for its collegiate system, as the University is made up of colleges, typically with a few hundred students in each. This offers all the resources of an internationally-acclaimed research-intensive University with the supportive community environment of a liberal arts college.

## American connections

- ◆ With over 26,000 resident alumni, the United States is home to the largest number of Oxford University graduates outside the UK.
- ◆ The US is Oxford's largest source of international students and international academic staff.
- ◆ Oxford academics and scientists publish research with American colleagues more frequently than with any other nationality, and the USA provides the largest source of funding for Oxford research outside of the UK.
- ◆ The Rothermere American Institute in Oxford was opened by President Bill Clinton in 2001. The institute hosts the finest library of Americana to be found outside the US.

## Alumni

Famous Americans who have studied at Oxford include:

- ◆ President Bill Clinton
- ◆ Elena Kagan and Stephen Breyer, US Supreme Court Justices
- ◆ Susan Rice, US National Security Advisor
- ◆ Richard Levin, longest-serving President of Yale
- ◆ George Stephanopoulos, television journalist
- ◆ Cory Booker, US Senator
- ◆ Reid Hoffman, internet entrepreneur, co-founder of LinkedIn
- ◆ Harper Lee, author (*To Kill a Mockingbird*)
- ◆ Naomi Wolf, author (*The Beauty Myth*) and political consultant
- ◆ Kris Kristofferson, writer, singer-songwriter, musician, and actor
- ◆ Rachel Maddow, TV anchor and host on MSNBC



*President Barack Obama was sworn in using the same bible as Abraham Lincoln used at his investiture in 1861. The Lincoln Bible was published by Oxford University Press in 1853.*

# Courses

## Oxford offers:

- ♦ full time undergraduate degrees
- ♦ Junior Year Abroad
- ♦ full time graduate degrees, both taught and research courses
- ♦ part time distance learning courses and summer schools for adults



While Oxford is rightly famed for its Classics and Humanities courses it is also a world-leader in many scientific areas of study.

## Undergraduate courses

Undergraduate degrees at Oxford are more specialised than those at American universities. There are no major or minor subjects here, so you can't mix and match different courses.

When you apply, you need to choose one course from the list of single honours courses (one subject) and joint honours courses (two or more subjects). For the full list please see: [www.ox.ac.uk/courses](http://www.ox.ac.uk/courses).

You will spend all your time at Oxford studying just the subject or subjects that you chose at the start. This will suit some students really well, though perhaps not everyone, as it means you focus on the course you've chosen, right from the start.

The first year of each course usually follows a core programme, where everyone on your course takes the same classes and tutorials, leading up to first year exams. In later years there is usually still a core curriculum, but also a wide range of options, so you can specialise in areas of your course that particularly interest you.

A standard bachelor's degree in England usually takes three years, in contrast to the American four-year degree. In the sciences, students may do a fourth year to gain a master's degree. Some language courses take four years, including up to one year in a country where that language is spoken.

*The Oxford English Dictionary: the recognised authority on the English language worldwide*



## Independent study

A typical week at Oxford and at a leading US college would probably be very different. In the US, you would probably spend a lot of time in structured classes in fairly large groups. At Oxford, you would have lectures with large groups but you would also have tutorials. These are hour-long meetings between (typically) two students and one tutor, where you discuss an essay or problems you have been working on. You would have one or two tutorials a week throughout your course, and they provide you with an extraordinary level of personal attention and feedback.

Tutors at Oxford are like professors at American universities. They are not only dedicated teachers, they are also active researchers, developing new knowledge at the cutting edge of their subjects, which they may bring into tutorial discussions.

You are required to structure your own time: you have to organise your work to complete assignments in time for your tutorials.

## Law and Medicine

Another difference from the US is that law and medicine can be studied as undergraduate courses – you do not need to complete another degree first. You can study for a BA in law (equivalent to an LLB) in just three years. The full medical course at Oxford is six years long. This begins with a three year pre-clinical science degree, followed by three years of clinical training.

## Research partnerships

Oxford's research collaborations include a longstanding connection with Princeton. There are three main components to the relationship: student exchange, research collaboration and a joint postdoctoral programme in global political economy.

## Entrance Requirements

Competition for places at Oxford is very strong, and even excellent grades will not guarantee you a place.

As a guide to the minimum we would usually expect, you would need:

SAT Reasoning Test with at least 1,400 in Critical Reading and Mathematics and preferably also 700 or more in Writing.

**OR** ACT with a score of at least 32 out of 36.

**AND**

Grade 5 in three or more Advanced Placement Tests in appropriate subjects.

**OR** SAT Subject Tests in three appropriate subjects at 700 or better.

**OR** a combination of APs and SAT Subject Tests

# How to apply

Students usually apply at the beginning of their senior year. All candidates must apply through UCAS by 15 October. All courses at Oxford start in October, almost a full year after the application deadline.

## Submit an application via UCAS

UCAS ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)) is similar to the Common App- you can apply to several UK universities with one application, but you can only apply for one course at Oxford and cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge in the same year.

You provide details of your high school record, and also write a personal statement outlining why you want to study the subject you have chosen. There is also a section for your teacher or councillor to provide a reference for you- including the grades that they expect you to achieve in any exams you still have to take.

## Sit an admissions test and/or submit some written work

Many of our courses require you to sit an admissions test and/or submit some written work – you can check the requirements for your chosen course at [www.ox.ac.uk/courses](http://www.ox.ac.uk/courses). Admissions tests can be taken at your own school (as long as the school registers in advance), or there are several open centres in the USA. It is important to make these arrangements in good time, before the 15 October deadline. Most of the tests then take place in early November - please see [www.ox.ac.uk/tests](http://www.ox.ac.uk/tests) for more information.

## Attend an interview

The strongest candidates will be invited to an academic interview in December. Candidates who are able to travel to Oxford for interview are welcome to do so. If you are not able to travel, tutors may choose to interview you by telephone or Skype. An Oxford admissions interview is an academic interview: in the sciences, you might be asked to solve an equation; in the humanities, you might be given a poem to read and analyse. We want to understand your academic potential, and give you a chance to experience Oxford learning.

## Receive an offer

If your application is successful, you will receive an offer of a place by mid-January. If you have not yet completed all your high school qualifications then this offer will probably be conditional on your final grades. This is not the same as the wait list for a US university. If you achieve the grades required in a conditional offer then your place at Oxford is guaranteed.

For further details of the application process, please see [www.ox.ac.uk/apply](http://www.ox.ac.uk/apply).

This requirement will be updated in line with the revised SATs: for up-to-date entrance requirements please see [ox.ac.uk/intquals](http://ox.ac.uk/intquals). Other equivalents would also be acceptable, such as the International Baccalaureate with a level of performance around 38-40, including core points, with 6s or 7s in the higher subjects.

Students are also welcome to apply to Oxford while they are studying at other universities for a Junior Year Abroad, or for a complete degree. However, Oxford does not accept transfer students, so if you want to study for a full degree at Oxford, you will need to start the course here from the beginning.

## Visa information and other support

The Student Information and Advisory Service provides visa and immigration information to new students. This includes how to obtain a visa to study, information about your status and your legal obligations, immigration for family members, travel during your stay and staying on to work after your studies. The Service also offers an orientation programme to help you settle in.

[www.ox.ac.uk/students/international\\_students](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/international_students)



## Selection criteria

We are looking for academic achievement and academic potential. Although we take many all-round talented students, who captain sports teams, run volunteer societies, and write plays, we do not select students for their extra-curricular achievements or their leadership. In contrast to our US peer universities, we select on academic criteria alone. This means that our academics – your future professors – are the people making the admissions decisions and conducting admissions interviews.

## Fees

Most American students pay University fees at our international rate, which is very competitive with US universities. Many of our undergraduate courses are just three years long, which can significantly reduce the cost of your degree. Our world-class resources also help keep your living costs low. For example, our outstanding libraries mean that you won't need to buy many books. [www.ox.ac.uk/funding](http://www.ox.ac.uk/funding)

## Funding and scholarships

US students can apply for federal student loans through the US Direct Loan Programme. These loans will fund up to your full cost of attendance and are available for nearly all courses at Oxford. Alternatively, some US students choose a private student loan through Sallie Mae. If you are interested in either loan, please review the information at [www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/us-loans](http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/us-loans) before making your application.

Unfortunately, we are not able to provide financial aid to international students except in certain rare circumstances. In general, international students need to be confident that they will be able to meet the costs themselves.

Students applying to study a second undergraduate degree may be eligible for a Rhodes Scholarship. [www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk](http://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk)

The one exception to this rule is for students who have already completed their first degree, and who may apply for 'Senior Status', to start in the second year of an Oxford degree.

[www.ox.ac.uk/sud](http://www.ox.ac.uk/sud)

# The city of Oxford

Oxford is in the beautiful Cotswolds region, with traditional English scenery of rolling hills. It's just an hour to London by train, and there are excellent connections to the airports.

There are two universities in the city: Oxford University itself, and Oxford Brookes University. This means that for a fairly small city, Oxford has a large student population of over 30,000, bringing a youthful and cosmopolitan atmosphere and plenty to see and do.

There is no campus as such, as most colleges and departments are situated in and around the city centre. The beautiful and historic architecture may be familiar to you from films such as *Shadowlands*, *The Golden Compass* and *Harry Potter*. Oxford is the city which inspired writers such as JRR Tolkien, Lewis Carroll and CS Lewis.

As well as the ancient buildings, there are also retail stores, numerous coffee shops and restaurants, and a thriving bar and club scene. Oxford also has a surprising amount of green space, including beautiful riverside walks, the oldest botanic garden in the UK, the University Parks and college gardens.

## Student life

Student life is primarily based in the individual Oxford colleges – where you would live, at least in your first year, and make your first friends. There are dozens of clubs and societies at a college level, and hundreds more across the University, suitable for your level of interest in all kinds of sports, dance, music, drama, journalism, volunteer work – or whatever else you want to do. The Oxford Union Society is a particularly popular place to go, with debates and meetings with world famous speakers, as well as parties and other events. The Union has a strong American tradition: Presidents Reagan, Nixon and Carter have addressed the Society. Two of the greatest figures of 1960s America spoke at the Union shortly before their tragic deaths: Malcolm X, and Senator Robert Kennedy. More recent visitors include Madeleine Albright, Michael Douglas, Natalie Portman, Jon Bon Jovi, Nancy Pelosi, and Morgan Freeman.

However busy you are during the day, you have your own room to go back to in the evening, as Oxford has only single student bedrooms, and no dormitories.

It's difficult to take on paid work during Oxford terms - there's so much to pack in that there just isn't time. However, you can find jobs during the vacations of course, and our expert Careers Service can also support you in finding employment after you graduate.

## Finding out more

Oxford's Student Recruitment Team visits the US every year. To find out about events near you check [www.ox.ac.uk/int](http://www.ox.ac.uk/int)

If you are coming to Oxford, then we really recommend you come to an open day if possible, or download one of our audio tours. [www.ox.ac.uk/opendays](http://www.ox.ac.uk/opendays)  
[www.ox.ac.uk/audiotours](http://www.ox.ac.uk/audiotours)

If you have any questions at all, please contact our Admissions Information Centre [study@ox.ac.uk](mailto:study@ox.ac.uk)

+44 (0) 1865 288000



Michelle Obama addresses prospective students during a visit to Oxford



Sport at Oxford: from college competition to Olympic excellence.

There are currently over 30 alumni groups in the US. For more details: [www.alumni.ox.ac.uk](http://www.alumni.ox.ac.uk)

Oxford's many Olympians include American swimmer Davis Tarwater, gold medallist at London 2012.

### STUDENT COMMENT: MAY

Never in my wildest dreams did I picture myself as an Oxford student, yet here I am, studying at one of the most prestigious universities in the world. As proud as I am about it, I must say I owe a lot to the fact that I am the only person I know from home that even applied. Give it a try: you never know!



### STUDENT COMMENT: JANE

I know that my professors are experts in their field. Working with them, often one-on-one, is one of the real highlights of Oxford, something I didn't expect to get out of an undergraduate degree, and that I doubt I could have received at any of the American universities to which I applied.

### MORE STUDENT COMMENT

See Oxford students from around the world interviewed in a series of short information films online. Just go to [www.ox.ac.uk/100faces](http://www.ox.ac.uk/100faces)

