

Summary of the Admissions Process for Chemistry

Oxford University, 2018-19

Summary

In all 637 (last year 585) applications were received in 2018 for Chemistry. Of these 596 (544) were shortlisted. In all 221 (215) offers (including open offers) were made. 73 (51) shortlisted candidates had their colleges reallocated to even out the chances of admission between colleges.

Those given offers have school backgrounds as follows:

State school, 89 (40%); independent school, 79 (34%), other (including unknown), 53 (24%).

The gender breakdown was as follows:

Male, 115 (52%); female 106 (48%).

Short-listing

In light of the competition for places, the purpose of short-listing is to provide time, during the December interview window in Oxford, to guarantee that all short-listed applicants receive at least two interviews.

The TSA test was run as a pilot for the second time this year and was only used to add candidates to the shortlist who would otherwise not have been invited for interview.

Short-listing is performed by college tutors in accordance with the stated admissions criteria (<http://admissions.chem.ox.ac.uk/admissions-criteria.aspx>) on the basis of all available and relevant data: in particular these data include all aspects of the applicant's UCAS form and any further relevant contextual data specific to the application. The application is graded in a scale of 1 to 5 against agreed descriptors. Candidates graded below 3 were not shortlisted, except for a small number of special cases. All recommendations not to shortlist must be submitted to the Chemistry Admissions Coordinator for scrutiny, making known the reasons for the decision. In a small number of cases the decision not to shortlist was overruled by the Admissions Coordinator. The availability of all candidates not shortlisted, together with the reasons, was notified to all other colleges for a period of 4 days before the shortlist was finalised, and a small number of these candidates were brought back into contention at the request of a college.

Throughout the process all UCAS forms, all contextual information, comments and interview grades, are easily accessible to all college tutors involved with admissions via a web-based database.

Letters and/or emails are then sent to candidates by the Colleges informing them of the outcome of the short-listing exercise.

Interviews

All short-listed candidates are invited to Oxford for interview around mid-December. The timetable of interviews by subject is readily available on an Admissions Office webpage well in advance of the dates.

Each applicant has a first-assigned college, which is either the college to which they applied or a college randomly assigned by the Admissions Office or the Admissions Coordinator in such a way as to even out the competition for places across colleges. Each applicant is also randomly assigned a second college by an algorithm so as to equalise across colleges the interview load per place ratio.

During their time in Oxford, applicants have at least two interviews at their first assigned college, and may also be interviewed by their second assigned college and other colleges. Interviews are academic in nature. An applicant's performance is judged according to the admissions criteria. The interviews are graded on a scale of 1-5 against agreed descriptors. All shortlisted flagged candidates are interviewed at two separate colleges.

One or more interviews by Skype, phone or video-conference facilities, are typically arranged for any short-listed applicant who is unable to attend interviews in Oxford. These interviews commonly take place in the week before the interviews in Oxford. 54 (37) candidates were interviewed remotely in this way.

Decisions

The Admissions Group operates various procedures in a coordinated effort to ensure that the strongest applicants are admitted to the University irrespective of college choice; these include transparency of all application grades, interview grades, and UCAS forms amongst all tutors involved with admissions, and a final meeting of tutors at which the strongest unplaced applicants are collectively discussed and final offers, including open offers, are made by the Admissions Group.

Decisions are deemed to be official at the end of the Group's final meeting and the short-listed applications are assigned a final overall grade. These decisions are then conveyed by tutors to their respective college offices for dissemination to short-listed applicants.

Standard offers are stated in the University Prospectus for those taking A-levels, the International Baccalaureate or Advanced Highers; college tutors seek advice from admissions tutors or the Admissions Office in making other offers.

Feedback

Feedback, other than decisions, will not automatically be sent out, but applicants may seek feedback from their first-assigned colleges about any aspect of the admissions process. Feedback will not be sent out until January, once the admissions process is complete.