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**Evie's Oxbridge Application**

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### **Evie's Oxbridge Application Experience:**

Hello, I'm a 6<sup>th</sup> form student hoping to study Classics next year at University – here is my experience of applying for Classics at Oxford, which I hope can be useful to anyone thinking about applying.

### **What did you do at GCSEs:**

I was not always set on Classics as a subject; at GCSE I studied Latin, History, Spanish, Music and triple science.

### **What did you do at A-levels:**

### **Were you State or Privately educated:**

I attended a private school for 6<sup>th</sup> form where I eventually chose to continue studying Latin for A-Level alongside History and Maths.

### **Why did you apply to the Oxford:**

I decided to attend the Oxbridge Classics open day in the middle of Year 12, which I would say was very influential in deciding the path of my uni application.

After spending quite a bit of time researching various different degrees (all the way up to the end of August!) I decided that I wanted to apply to Oxford because of the amazing flexibility of the course, including opportunities to study philosophy, the emphasis on language learning at the start, and also because I just thought Oxford was a lovely place.

### **Why did you apply to the Oxbridge college that you did:**

As for picking my college, I already knew that I wanted to apply to one of the more relaxed and progressive colleges, and when I went to visit I loved the location of St Hilda's by the river. From their website and the people I met there, the college seemed quite chilled and accepting, which is what I was looking for.

I also liked that they have quite a large number of Classics students per year.

### **What did the application process look like:**

Onto the application process which involved three main sections – writing my personal statement, taking the CAT (Classics Admissions Test) and the interview.

Over the course of Year 12 and especially in the summer before Year 13, I spent time learning about the ancient world. I read various books like Mary Beard's SPQR, Mary Renault's trilogy about Alexander the Great, and a translation of The Odyssey. I also enjoy listening to podcasts, so I tried to listen to lectures and podcasts like those from the Oxford Faculty of Classics while travelling. I noted down anything that I'd done on my phone, with a few of my thoughts, so that by the time it came to writing my personal statement I had a record of the extra academic work that I'd done.



In year 12 and the summer, I wrote essays for two competitions – one Roman history and one about the translation of ancient literature. I put both of these on my personal statement, and I actually think it was a very useful thing to do because when I was asked about both of those topics at my interview, I felt that I could actually expand on what I'd written in my PS a bit more because I'd done extra reading and thinking about those topics which didn't make it in to what the university actually saw.

For the Classics Aptitude Test, which for me involved two unseen translations in Latin, I essentially just spent lots of time practicing translation. Over summer and about once a week until the test, I did a Latin translation from either my A-Level Latin textbook, an old textbook I was given by my teacher or from one of the practice papers available online. I wrote down any vocab I didn't know in a book. In the week before the CAT test I did try to properly revise grammar and vocab in addition to doing practice papers. I'm not actually sure how the test went in the end.

But I would say the most important thing for this was just practicing translation.

At first, the past papers seemed almost impossibly difficult, but I like to think that I was starting to get a better sense of guessing certain words and phrases even if I wasn't 100% sure what they meant.

### **The interview process:**

For the interviews, I essentially did the same thing that I'd been doing for my personal statement – just spending time reading articles, books, and related podcasts. I realised that I hadn't put much about Greek on my personal statement, so I (poorly) attempted to teach myself some Greek, and I made some notes on The Odyssey and Greek Tragedy. I also made sure that I re-read all of my set texts, including the introduction in the textbooks, in case I was asked about that. I practiced some standard personal statement questions with my parents, like why I wanted to study classics, and what I thought about certain authors on my personal statement.

I was also very fortunate to have had two mock interviews at school – one where I had to comment on some different English translations of a Latin poem, and one where I discussed my personal statement and my opinions on the general relevance of classics. I did think these were useful for getting used to talking in an academic way in a stressful situation, although the real thing was a lot more stressful.

To be honest, I found interviews a difficult experience. I was asked about some parts of my personal statement, but I also had to read an unseen poem and answer questions on philosophy which was all quite new to me. I felt very tense for a lot of the time I was there, and for weeks after both of my interviews I felt so embarrassed and I kept replaying what I'd said, wishing that I had answered certain questions differently or brushed up on my language beforehand.



### What was it like getting your results:

Although I wasn't even completely sure if I wanted to go to Oxford after that experience, I was still nervous to get the results of my application. I was very much preparing myself for rejection and imagining my life at other universities. I got an email just before I left to go to school and I did actually have a bit of a cry. It felt like the application process had been so long and although I wasn't completely set on Oxford as a place, I did feel like I had really put my heart and my love of Classics into this application. Once the shock wore off, I was really overjoyed and I do feel incredibly lucky to have actually gotten an offer – although I was very much preparing myself for rejection, I also recognise that I did apply with the support of my teachers and family which allowed me to spend the time on my application that I did, for which I'm incredibly grateful.

I still have mixed feelings about my offer, and I actually haven't accepted it yet– which might sound crazy, but I feel nervous about the intense academic environment of Oxford, and about my own ability to keep up with the other probably much smarter students.

### If you could only give 3 pieces of advice to your former self what would they be:

If I had to give only three pieces of advice to an Oxbridge applicant, I would say:

- 1.) If you have an interview, try to make yourself feel as relaxed as possible, actually set aside time to prepare for your test/interview.
- 2.) Most importantly find a part of the subject that you are really passionate about and explore that.
- 3.) Everyone's application process looks different - so don't over compare yourself! If you feel bad about comparing your application to others - don't do it.

This is of course only my own experience of applying to Oxford, and from speaking to other interviewees and offer-holders, everyone's application process looks different. However, I hope that this might provide at least some insight into applying for the wonderful subject of Classics!

