



Sarah's Oxbridge Application



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Sarah's Oxbridge Application Experience:

Hello all, I'm Sarah and currently I hold an offer to study the 4-year classics course at Fitzwilliam College Cambridge. I have only ever attended state schools.

What did you do/get at GCSEs & A-levels:

Were you State or Privately educated:

For GCSE I studied triple science, English and maths, Computer Science, French, Drama, RS and Latin, achieving 6 9s, 4 8s and a 7. For A-level, I continued with Religious Studies, Biology, and took up Classical Civilisation as Latin wasn't offered at A-level and have been predicted three A*s, but will have to see what the government decides to spit me out.

Why did you apply to Cambridge?

I chose Cambridge as both the course and the city were more appealing to me. I liked how Cambridge gave you the chance to catch up and then be on a level with the students who came in with Latin or Greek as opposed to following a different course throughout.

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

Fitzwilliam specifically appealed to me for many reasons. I had attended a conducting course there in year 10 where I fell in love with its gardens, and years later I entered a classics essay competition they were running (for year 12 students, highly recommend), was highly commended in it and when attending the award ceremony had another tour of the college and felt at home.

What did the application process look like:

The application process was fairly straight forward, there were no pre-interview assessments and it was as simple as writing my personal statement (which I received some help with from the Oxford Classics Outreach worker having done a summer school at the other place in the summer of year 12), sending off UCAS, and waiting for an interview invite.

Being a 4-year applicant, my at-interview assessment was the day after the interview itself, so I had to arrange for accommodation in college which gave me a chance to sample the food in the buttery.

The interview process:

I had two interviews, the first with academics from Corpus Christi and the second with some from Fitz, including one I had met previously at the award ceremony which put me at ease. Obviously we're not allowed to go into specifics of questions, but I was given



various visual sources to comment on, as well as themes to discuss, linguistic exercises to explore and we also commented on some specific parts of my personal statement. I would say it's worth looking up your interviewers briefly before the interview to see their areas of interest as the questions I got from each seemed to often reflect that. Other than that don't stress about prepping, as there really isn't much you can do. Read over your personal statement and know what your answer to "why do you want to study classics" is and that'll serve you well. You can prepare more for the language assessment which for me was a GCSE level Latin translation. I'm not overexaggerating when I say this went awfully, and I cried a fair bit after as I thought I'd ruined everything. Goes to show you can't tell what went well and clearly my interviews were good enough to convince them to give me a shot. When I got the offer I was in shock. The Oxford replies had come the day before and no one from my school had got one including my best friend so I had very low hopes. In the end, four of us from my school got offers out of around 15 who were applying which was quite a successful year for us.

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

My three pieces of advice for anyone thinking of applying, especially anyone from an underrepresented background would be:

1. Don't doubt yourself or your ability.
2. don't try and guess how your interview has gone as you really can't tell.
3. Reach out and ask for help from anyone you can, especially if your school isn't much help themselves.





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