

Hi there!

My name is Orock Nsoatabe and I am the mature outreach ambassador at the University of Cambridge. I wanted to take this opportunity to tell you a bit about Cambridge and hopefully dispel any myths or misconceptions you might have about what it is like to apply and study here!

The University of Cambridge is split into 29 undergraduate colleges, of which four exclusively accept applications from students aged 21+. These colleges are Hughes Hall, Lucy Cavendish (women only), St. Edmund's and Wolfson. Colleges are mini-communities or campuses that operate within the wider university. They provide facilities such as libraries, common rooms, bars, gyms, and dining halls and are where students ordinarily live, eat, study and socialise on a day-to-day basis.

The mature colleges provide a unique environment for students who have more life experience and responsibilities than the average school leaver. They are used to dealing with a wide variety of non-traditional qualifications and can provide accommodation for families. Furthermore, if you apply to a mature college for any subject apart from Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Music, Philosophy, History of Art and Architecture, you are able to apply in the March round. This is a second application round for which the deadline is 1st March. The later deadline can be of great benefit to Access students who are on one-year courses and need more time to be able to build up evidence of their achievement. It also allows advisers to write specific, personalised references and tends to produce more confident interview performances.

Regardless of the college you attend, be it mature or standard-age, you will receive the same high standard of education and support. You will be taught at the central faculties and your degree will be awarded by the University, not the college.

Cambridge welcomes applications from students studying Access to HE diplomas, and we regularly accept students with these qualifications onto our arts, humanities and social sciences courses, as well as Psychological and Behavioural Sciences. However, Access to HE courses alone are not considered sufficient preparation for entry to the other science courses or Economics. Even so, Access diplomas can prove a useful springboard for prospective science applicants who are willing to undertake further academic preparation before applying. If you'd like to know more about whether or not your qualifications would make a competitive application to the university, please do get in touch!

### *Why Consider Cambridge?*

Now that that's out of the way, you might be wondering why you'd even want to attend Cambridge. Well, here are just a few key reasons:

- The teaching style at Cambridge is unique and intensive. Alongside lectures, seminars, fieldwork and practicals, students here also receive personal attention from tutors during what's known as 'supervisions'. Supervisions are regular teaching sessions for one or two students and tend to be considered the most rewarding and beneficial part of studying at Cambridge. Led by supervisors who are specialists in the subject being studied, supervisions help students to develop independent learning skills and explore specialised interests. Supervisors will support your learning with suggestions, guidance, explanations and regular, detailed feedback on your work.
- The University of Cambridge has a fantastic and international reputation amongst employers, and is able to offer its graduates excellent job prospects upon achieving their degrees. The University Careers' Service is there to support you in pursuing your ambitions during and after your degree.

- Cambridge offers a strong and extensive network of academic, pastoral and financial support, with the generous Cambridge Bursary offering up to £3,500 per year for students with a household income below £42,600.

### *The Application Process*

(<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/why-cambridge/support/mature-students/mature-student-applications>)

1. Choose your course. Pick carefully: we're looking for people who are honestly enthusiastic about the subject they say they want to study!  
(<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses>)
2. Choose your college, or make an open application  
(<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/colleges/choosing-a-college>)
3. Write your personal statement. Ideally this should be about ¾ subject-focused and should show how you have engaged with your reading and describe the skills you've developed through work or study. Make sure you offer evidence for any of the claims you make.  
(<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/how-write-ucas-undergraduate-personal-statement>)
4. If you are applying to a standard-age college, you will need to register for the relevant pre-interview assessment by 15th October. If you are applying to a mature college, you do not need to do this! Instead, you will take a shortened version at interview. These tests tend to be skills-based and don't tend to require lots of specific knowledge, however curricula and sample papers are available online:  
(<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/admission-assessments>)
5. Send off your UCAS application by 15th October to meet the first deadline, or 1st March for the second one:  
(<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/dates-and-deadlines>)
6. Fill in a Supplementary Application Questionnaire: you don't have to write anything here, but it does give you the opportunity to go into further detail about why you want to study this particular course at Cambridge: (<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/saq>)
7. If your recent education has been adversely affected by circumstances outside of your control, ask a relevant professional to fill in an Extenuating Circumstances Form to explain the situation. This might be a teacher/advisor, doctor, lawyer or social worker:  
(<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/decisions/extenuating-circumstances-form>)
8. Written work: for certain subjects, some colleges will ask you to send samples of essays you have written in the course of your study. (Details of Wolfson College's requirements can be found here: <https://www.wolfson.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate-study/applying>)
9. Interviews: not a reason to panic! REMEMBER:
  - No-one is trying to catch you out; we want everybody to do the best they can
  - It's not a job interview, but an academic conversation focused on your interests
  - Not the final hurdle: at every stage of the application process, Admissions Tutors are looking at all the parts of your application, so decisions are made based on all the different bits of information we have about you
  - One main function of the interview is to see if the special supervision teaching style is likely to be right for you

More info available at:

<https://www.wolfson.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate-study/applying/interviews>

*What are we looking for?*

- Potential, enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity
- Clarity and flexibility of thought
- A good fit with the teaching style
- Distinctions in all relevant parts of your Access course (45 credits at Level 3)

The mature colleges of the university exist to welcome able people from all backgrounds into Higher Education. Please do get in touch if you have any questions!

*Orock is not in this post anymore but do feel free to contact me using the details below. I'd be happy to show you around Wolfson College if you would like to visit and can also arrange opportunities to meet current mature students in your chosen subject as well as Directors of Studies. I hope you'll consider applying to the University of Cambridge and to Wolfson College in particular!*

*Joe Cotton*

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Tweet: [@WolfsonOutreach](https://twitter.com/WolfsonOutreach)

Visit: [www.wolfson.cam.ac.uk/](http://www.wolfson.cam.ac.uk/)

*So what's so good about Wolfson?*

1. Offers on-site [accommodation](#) to all incoming undergraduates for the duration of their degree, with rents below the university average
2. A 24/7 [library](#), [dining hall](#) with breakfast, lunch and dinner (and always a veggie option), newly refurbished [club room](#), newly equipped [gym](#), and beautiful [gardens](#)
3. A large (150+) and thriving undergraduate community, with an active students association ([WCSA](#)) and students of all different ages and ethnicities
4. A friendly, informal atmosphere, where open mindedness and forward thinking is part of the tradition and staff and porters are friendly and approachable
5. Close to the University Library, the Sidgwick Site (Humanities), West Cambridge Site (Sciences) and Grantchester Meadows.

Wolfson College is home to the largest community of mature students in Cambridge - over 150 students study here and the majority also choose to live on-site in our college [accommodation](#). Not only is this convenient, but it also helps to build a great community feeling as students can easily come together to eat, study and socialise. The average age at Wolfson is 25, although ages range from 21–60+. Across the College our current students come from 87 different countries and around half of our undergraduates are from the UK. If you are over 21 and interested in undergraduate study at the highest level, surrounded by like-minded people, do consider applying to Wolfson as a [mature student](#). Remember our application deadlines are on the 15<sup>th</sup> October and the 1<sup>st</sup> March (both through UCAS).

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