



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

Parliamentary Briefing

Access and Admissions to Oxford University

- In 2013 56.8% of offers for places at Oxford University went to state school pupils and 43.2% to independent schools.
- State school pupils made up 62% of applications to Oxford and Cambridge¹
- Black pupils who receive 3 As at A level are more likely to apply to Oxford than other groups. However black pupils are much less likely to achieve 3 As in the first place (9.6% against 23% of white students).
- 22% of Oxford University students are black or minority ethnic. 7.9% of the UK population is black or minority ethnic.
- Of the 80,000 children eligible for free school meals in the UK in 2007, only 176 received 3 As at A level. Of those 45 (more than a quarter) got places at Oxford or Cambridge.
- Around 10% of Oxford's UK undergraduates are from families with incomes under £16,000 (Free school meal threshold)

Diagnosing the problem

The 2010 Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances found that

"Analysis of outcomes in the UK education system shows that around 55% of children who are in the bottom 20% at age seven remain there at age 16, and less than 20% of them move into the top 60...."

and most recently the APPG on Social Mobility stated;

"the point of greatest leverage for social mobility is what happens between ages 0-3"².

Evidence based social policy on early years' intervention and governments of both parties have made this a priority.

Are the top universities admitting fairly?

While state schools educate 93% of all pupils, they account for only 67% of the pupils receiving 3As and above³. Oxford has been given a government benchmark of an intake of 67% of pupils from the state sector. It currently offers 57.5% of places to pupils from this sector⁴. Oxford University argues that this shortfall can be accounted for as follows:

¹ Excluding applicants without appropriate qualifications.

² (APPG Social Mobility, 2012)

³ (Harris, 2011)

⁴ (UCAS, 2010)

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- Many AAA students apply for courses not offered by the University, such as veterinary sciences
- Many AAA students have A levels in subjects not recognised by the University, such as General Studies.
- Many AAA students have not taken them in one go, which is required by the University.
- Analysis by Oxford University has found that state school pupils then tend to apply in disproportionately high numbers for the most over-subscribed courses; 41% of all state school applications are for just 5 subjects, Economics and Management, Medicine, Maths, Law and English.
- UCAS evidence indicates that first generation students generally look to local universities, on average travelling 30 miles from home. Neither Oxford, nor Cambridge, has a significant high-density urban area within 30 miles.
- The population of the UK is not evenly distributed nor is examination attainment equal across the country. In 2013, 30% of state-educated pupils in Reading achieved AAA grades, or better; while in Newcastle it was 6.3%. There are almost as many state-educated students in Kent achieve AAA grades, as there are in the entire North East of England.

Selection

The admission process for Oxford is based on academic ability alone as demonstrated by:

- Predicted A level results
- Attained GCSE results
- Multiple interviews
- A further written aptitude test in a majority of subjects.

Oxford spends £5 million a year on outreach work, and a further £11 million on student financial support. The University already has direct contact with 72% of all schools providing post-16 education.

Oxford also provides highly-regarded summer schools for state school pupils. Participants who go on to apply to the University, 40% are successful.

Oxford also has system of “contextual flags” in the application process, which highlights where an applicant will have suffered a particular educational or social disadvantage. The flagging system allows for a guaranteed interview if the applicant achieves other criteria.

Contact

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