



Admissions assessments for the University of Cambridge



Delivery of pre-interview admissions assessments

Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing is working with the University of Cambridge to produce and deliver pre-interview admissions assessments for its applicants. The assessments are required for a number of undergraduate courses, as part of the application process.



The University introduced admissions assessments for the majority of undergraduate courses in 2016, having previously used AS Levels as a good predictor of their applicants' academic ability. Reforms to A Levels from 2015, including the de-coupling of AS Levels, was going to make it more difficult to identify those best suited to study for their chosen degree course. Admissions staff were reluctant to put more emphasis on the student's personal statement, which is not typically a good predictor of academic performance, or on the interviews that form a part of the Cambridge admissions process. With over 16,000 applicants from all over the world, the ability to differentiate between applicants from a wide range of educational systems was also growing more challenging.

As a result, the University decided to develop admissions assessments that could help them to select students with the best chance of succeeding on the course, and began working with us on the development, communication and implementation of the pre-interview assessments.

“ The fact that we publish everything about the assessment, such as support materials, means that it's available to everyone – which helps with widening participation. ”

Contact us

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About the University of Cambridge

The University of Cambridge is the second-oldest university in the English-speaking world and the world's fourth-oldest surviving university. The academic standards, history, influence and wealth of the University of Cambridge have made it one of the most prestigious universities in the world. As of 2019, Cambridge was the top-ranked university in the United Kingdom according to all major league tables.

About Admissions Testing Solutions

We develop and deliver tailored, research-based admissions solutions to meet specific requirements. We support governments, educational institutions and employers around the world to select applicants with the greatest potential for success, and provide applicants with an equal opportunity to show their potential. We work with you to understand your individual challenges, and provide solutions based on our extensive experience to help you achieve your strategic objectives.

About Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing

We are part of the University of Cambridge and have been working with UK and worldwide universities, governments and employers for more than 15 years. Our admissions assessments are a global mark of excellence that set the quality standard. Backed by extensive research, our admissions tests give your applicants the opportunity to prove they have what it takes and help enhance your selection process. We have a global network of centres that spans 150 countries, making it easy to assess applicants wherever they may be.

A number of subject-specific, pre-interview assessments were developed. These are used for undergraduate entry to Economics, Engineering, Natural Sciences and Computer Science. The Department of Medicine has continued to use the BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT) for its undergraduate applicants, while the Faculty of English adopted the English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT) already in use at the University of Oxford.

The Admissions Testing team began the development process in 2015, working with the relevant subject departments on assessment format and content. Following extensive consultations with subject specialists in the University, the Assessment team in Admissions Testing drew up specifications and commissioned sample items which were trialled on a mix of first-year undergraduates and school students in years 12 and 13. Following analysis and further refinement of the specifications, sample materials were developed for publication on the University's website in July 2016, before the first 'live' assessments were sat in November 2016. The Admissions team continues to work closely with Cambridge University to ensure the assessments play an important role in their admissions process.

As well as working together with the University on ongoing development of the pre-interview assessments, the Admissions Testing team also administers the assessments. Cambridge applicants can take their assessment at their own school or college, or in one of our authorised centres worldwide.

Sam Lucy, Director of Admissions for the Cambridge Colleges, said of the collaboration with Admissions Testing: 'Our admissions decision-making has been supported by the introduction of assessments. They provide a way of assessing our applicants against the same criteria, and the fact that we publish everything about the assessment, such as support materials, means that it's available to everyone – which helps with widening participation.'

'The assessments have helped to maintain the transparency of the University's admissions process and Colleges' decision-making, which reassures parents and schools alike. They also help to maintain parity in admissions across our unique collegiate structure, as they provide a common measure of aptitude across all our applicants.'

The success of the collaboration means that the original arrangement to provide pre-interview admissions assessments for two years was extended by another year up to 2020.

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