Biology Admissions Feedback 2019-20

This year the University of Oxford had a high number of applicants for Biology. Many of the candidates who applied made very good applications and, as every year, many difficult decisions had to be made. This year there were 7.39 applications per available place and only 50% of candidates were invited for interviews.

739 applications for Biology were received, of these 457 (61.8%) were home applicants, 64 (8.7%) were EU applicants, and 218 (29.5%) were overseas applicants. 472 (64%) applications were from female candidates and 267 (36%) were from male applicants.

Throughout the process, contextual data for UK candidates, including school performance and postcode data, were used when assessing applications. You can find more information about contextual data on the Oxford University website here.

Not every applicant can be interviewed. Decisions about which candidates to shortlist were based on exam results and predictions, and the UCAS academic reference and personal statement. Based on these factors, a central team of Biology tutors made recommendations to all other Biology tutors involved in admissions about which applicants should be shortlisted. As well as this, college Biology tutors assessed all applications. Shortlisting decisions were based on a combination of the central team’s recommendations and college Biology tutor’s assessments.

Given the number of shortlisted applicants and their uneven distribution between colleges, a large number of shortlisted candidates are reallocated from oversubscribed colleges to colleges with a lower ratio of candidates to places. All shortlisted candidates were invited for interviews in Oxford. All candidates who attended interviews in Oxford were interviewed at two colleges.

369 candidates were shortlisted for interview, of these 285 were home applicants (62% of those home applicants), 28 were EU applicants (44% of EU applicants) and 56 were overseas applicants (26% of overseas applicants). Of those shortlisted for interview, 243 were female (52% of those female applicants) and 126 were male (47% of male applicants).

In interviews Biology tutors were looking for candidates’ interest in biology; their ability to engage in conversation about biology related subjects; how they respond when they are given additional pieces of information; and how they respond when they are confronted with things that they don’t immediately know the answer to. For more details visit: https://www.biology.ox.ac.uk/our-students. Although the context of interviews differs between interviewing panels, all interviewers asked detailed questions about subjects, objects, or written/ graphic material that the interviewees were not expected to recognise or have studied before.

141 offers were made for Biology, of these 119 were home applicants (26% of home Biology applicants were successful), 11 were EU applicants (17% of EU Biology applicants were successful) and 11 were overseas applicants (5% of overseas Biology applicants were successful). 89 offers were made to female candidates (19% of female applicants were successful) and 52 were made to male candidates (19.5% of male applicants were successful).

The competition for places was very high this year. Only 50% of candidates were invited for interview and only 19% of applicants received an offer.