English Language and Literature Admissions Feedback 2019-20

This year the University of Oxford had a high number of applicants for English Language and Literature. Many of the candidates who applied made very good applications and, as every year, many difficult decisions had to be made.

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.

Unfortunately, not every applicant can be interviewed. Decisions about which candidates to shortlist were based on exam results and predictions, the UCAS academic reference and personal statement, submitted written work, and ELAT (English Literature Admissions Test) results.

UCAS forms were marked by Oxford English tutors based on previous examination results, qualifications predicted, the school or other institutional reference, and the personal statement.

Written work was marked by at least two Oxford English tutors based on the following criteria: attention to the literary aspects of texts; sensitivity to the creative use of language; evidence of careful and critical reading; an analytical approach; coherence of argument and articulacy of expression; precision, in the handling of concepts and in the evidence presented to support points; relevance to the question; and independence of thought.

Based on these factors, candidates were placed in pre-interview bands 1 to 10, where 1 is high. Those in pre-interview bands 1-5 inclusive were strongly recommended for shortlisting. Some of those in lower pre-interview bands were shortlisted, at the discretion of tutors, if there were some strong positive aspects of their application.

Given the number of shortlisted applicants and their uneven distribution between colleges, a 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. After first-college interviews, around 200 additional interviews were arranged at second and sometimes third colleges, to give each candidate the best chance of receiving a place.

Interviews were assessed on the basis of the following selection criteria: evidence of independent reading, capacity to exchange and build on ideas, clarity of thought and expression, analytical ability, flexibility of thought, evidence of independent thinking about literature, and readiness and commitment to read widely with discrimination. For more details visit: https://www.english.ox.ac.uk/shortlisting-and-selection-criteria-undergraduate#collapse385896.

The competition for places was very high this year. Only 67% of applicants were invited for interviews and only 29% of applicants were offered a place.