History of Art Admissions Feedback 2019-20

This year the University of Oxford had a high number of applicants for History of Art. 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 could be interviewed. Decisions about which candidates to shortlist were based on exam results and predictions, the UCAS academic reference and personal statement, and submitted written work. UCAS forms and written work were assessed by an admissions panel which included representatives from all colleges accepting History of Art candidates. Shortlisting decisions were made on the basis of applications as a whole.

Interviews were held centrally in the Department of History of Art. Candidates were invited to attend a briefing session on the morning of their interviews. In one interview, candidates were presented with an image with which they were unfamiliar.

Interviews, along with all other aspects of the application, were assessed according to the stated admissions criteria (https://www.hoa.ox.ac.uk/selection-criteria). Tutors are looking for intellectual curiosity, conceptual clarity, flexibility (that is, the capacity to engage with alternative perspectives and/or new information), accuracy and attention to detail, critical engagement, capacity for hard work, enthusiasm for the visual arts, evidence of the potential to develop an art historical imagination (that is, the ability to ground an argument in visual analysis and to make connections where relevant between art works and their historical context).

During the final selection meeting, the admissions panel assessed all candidates against the published selection criteria. Decisions were made on the basis of the application as a whole.

The competition for places was very high this year. Only 42% of applicants were shortlisted for interviews and only 15% of applicants were made offers.