Music Admissions Feedback 2019-20

This year the University of Oxford had a high number of applicants for Music. 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 work (essays, harmony and counterpoints, and compositions). An admissions panel, which included representatives from all colleges offering Music, reviewed every UCAS form according to the published selection criteria (http://www.music.ox.ac.uk/apply/undergraduate/application-procedure/), to make recommendations about which candidates to invite for interviews. Typically, candidates were only not invited for interview if they had not achieved or were not predicted to achieve the entry requirements, where there were no special considerations.

Essays, harmony and compositions, and compositions were marked by trained graduate students based on the selection criteria. The markers themselves did not partake in the decision-making process. More information is available at: http://www.music.ox.ac.uk/apply/undergraduate/application-procedure/.

Given the number of shortlisted applicants and their uneven distribution between colleges, a number of shortlisted candidates were 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 interviewing in Oxford had at least two interviews, one at their first college (the college that invited them) and one at an assigned second college, with additional interviews being arranged for some candidates. This aimed to give each candidate the best chance of receiving an offer.

Additional interviews were coordinated centrally and each interview panel was made up on two interviewers from different colleges.

Music tutors assessed interviews using the published selection criteria. Interviews aimed to assess candidates based on knowledge acquired though a current or completed A-level Music course (or equivalent); powers of reasoning: ability to reason and think critically; communication: ability to engage in debate and use appropriate terminology; and potential to engage with the undergraduate course. For more details visit: http://www.music.ox.ac.uk/apply/undergraduate/application-procedure/. Candidates were also invited to play their first instrument or sing at an audition for around five minutes.

Interviews tended to focus on interests mentioned in personal statements, written work, compositions (if submitted), and usually included a prose and/or musical excerpt which was given to the candidate a little while before the interview.

48% of applicants came from UK state schools and 34% came from UK independent schools. 59% of offer holders come from UK state schools and 32% come from UK independent schools.
The competition for places was very high this year. 80% of candidates were interviewed and only 46% of applicants were offered places.