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2023/2024

application guide

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president's address

Dear prospective applicants,

Welcome to the CUMSA application guide! This publication builds on efforts from past CUMSA committees and seniors to help give a better understanding of the Cambridge application process.

Applying to Cambridge may seem daunting, but if you are thinking about it, just give it a go! Cambridge is unique in many aspects, from its Tripos examinations to the inter-collegiate welfare systems. Plus, applications are not at all limited to those with perfect grades or embellished past achievements. The additional Cambridge-specific statements, interviews and tests provide a chance for anyone to do well! As a result, the society also sees students coming from a wide range of backgrounds.

Aside from this guide, CUMSA also offers a number of workshops to help with the application process. These include personal statement help and super curricular advice, among others. For more information, do follow our Instagram page @_cumsa for regular updates.

All the best! Good luck and we look forward to seeing you in Cambridge in the near future!

Jia Ming Lee

President 2023-2024
CUMSA

about Cambridge

The University of Cambridge was founded in 1209 and is the fourth oldest university in the world. It currently has over 12,000 undergraduates and more than 24,000 students and 12,000 staff in total. Among the alumni and affiliates there are 121 Nobel Prize Laureates, 47 Heads of State, and 210 Olympic medallists.

The university is made up of 31 independent self-governing colleges, 29 of which admit undergraduates. 3 of these colleges are for mature students (above the age of 21 at matriculation) and 2 are for women only. Students typically receive lectures & labs at a university/department level, while supervisions (small group teaching sessions) are often received at their own college.

Colleges typically offer accommodation for all undergraduate students and are the hub of social life and pastoral care for these students. Each student is assigned a **Director of Studies (DoS)** who looks after their academic careers and a **Tutor** who takes care of their pastoral needs, both of whom are typically Fellows of their college. Each college also has its own dining hall and JCR (or MCR or combined CR for the mature colleges) where formals and other social events are held respectively.

There are over **700** student societies at the university catering to interests in culture, arts, academia, drama, specific careers and sports. Colleges as well as the university as a whole have their own sports teams, with different tiers of teams, to allow for everyone to take part in a sport if they wish, whether it is their first time or they are a past Olympian (the university has had several).

Famous alumni from Singapore include 2 of Singapore's three Prime Ministers (the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew & PM Lee Hsien Loong), 5 current cabinet ministers and several Supreme Court justices.

about CUMSA

The late Mr Lee Kuan Yew first founded the Cambridge University Malayan Association (CUMA) in 1948, when he was a student at Fitzwilliam College.

The association was then renamed the Cambridge University Malaysia and Singapore Association (CUMSA) in 1960.

CUMSA holds a number of events throughout the year with the intention of creating a social environment with a familiar South-east Asian air. Amongst others, there is the annual orientation, CUMSA D&D, Garden Party, Formal, Singapore Festival and Oxbridge Games (a sports competition involving the Oxford University Malaysia and Singaporean Students Association).

CUMSA has numerous links with partner societies within Cambridge, fellow SingSocs in the UK and local organisations in Cambridge and Singapore. Besides social events, we hold admissions talks with schools to encourage more students to apply to Cambridge and support them in their respective applications and charity and outreach events where we give back to the local communities in Cambridge and Singapore.

how we can help

This year, we have a series of events, workshops and services to assist you in your application. These are our current plans. More information can be found on our Instagram page (@cumsa_), which will also have updates on dates and signup links.

ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT + LIFE IN CAM WORKSHOP	16 SEPTEMBER
INTERVIEW WORKSHOP	DECEMBER
MOCK INTERVIEWS	TBC
ASK US ANYTHING (@CUMSA_ ON IG)	ANYTIME!

general matters

overview

In general, the admissions process is much simpler than you may think. Through this guide, we too hope to guide you along this seemingly daunting process.

Firstly, choosing your course of study is arguably the most important decision you have to make. Think about what you enjoy, where your strengths lie, and what opportunities may present themselves because of your course. Other factors like the reputability of a faculty internationally, their staff and even smaller factors like cohort size may be a consideration for you.

Due to Cambridge's unique collegiate system, your choice of college is also really important. You will live in your college's accommodation and experience many of the social aspects of your University experience there, be it matriculation, formal halls, balls and more. Factors to consider include location (relative to the City Centre and also to your faculty department), aesthetics (traditional or modern), accommodation types and prices, and several other factors discussed in greater detail in our college section of this guide.

As for the actual admissions process, besides your teacher's recommendation and examinations results, admission tutors rely on your personal statement, written assessments (for some subjects) and interviews. Non-exhaustive personal statement samples are given to give you an idea of how to go about writing one. Moreover, the interview section serves to guide you through the interview specific to the subject, and the admissions test section some tips on preparing for and sitting these tests.

For assistance on the technical aspects of the application and UCAS system, consult your school, the Cambridge or UCAS websites or the resources in the last section of this guide. For questions on the application process, course or college, do contact the Cambridge admissions office or college directly, they would usuallly be happy to answer if you identify yourself as a prospective student.

Do note that the advice shared here is based on current students' personal experiences and hence may not be representative of the admission office's opinions. We hope this guide will offer insights and help you make an informed decision!

additional resources

PROSPECTUS

https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/uoc_2023_ug_prospectus.pdf

INTERNATIONAL PROSPECTUS

https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/uoc_2023_ug_prospectus.pdf

INFORMAL PROSPECTUS

https://www.applytocambridge.com/
(students' perspective, e.g. timetables)

For your personal statement, it might be useful to find course pages from other universities, which tend be straightforward in terms of what they are looking for in potential students. In some cases, Cambridge may be looking for similar qualities, and you could weave that into your personal statement.

Individual courses and faculties also post useful videos on their Youtube pages, some of these are from COVID-era webinars. It is useful to watch videos from the same course but different college if one is not available for your college, as the course structure and syllabus is set at a university level. There may also be personal statement and interview workshops recorded online. Some colleges also have access websites and Instagram or Facebook pages.

additional resources

There are several blogs written by Cambridge students describing the course and their experience. Most of them mentioned here are CUMSA members.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

https://il315.user.srcf.net/ by Ivin Lee

MEDICINE

https://thesciencecodex.wordpress.com/ by Ardon Pillay

MATH

https://dec41.user.srcf.net/notes/
by Dexter Chua
Example sheets also available at
https://www.damtp.cam.ac.uk/user/examples/
and http://www.dpmms.cam.ac.uk/study/

ENGINEERING

https://fabulousformulas.home.blog by Trevor Lee

NATURAL SCIENCES

youtube.com/c/SailingwithSharvani
Content on the NSAA, how to choose a college and interview and personal statement FAQs with fellows

SCHOLARSHIPS

https://brightsparks.com.sg/

UCAS

http://www.ri.edu.sg/school-life/higher-education-office
(internal deadlines may be different from your school's)

colleges: an intro

christ's

ACCOM

First year accommodation will usually be at typewriter staircase 1-3, in which case you will have to move out during the term break to another building in the college. However, some freshers do stay elsewhere, e.g. in Blyth, where you don't have to move out during the holidays. Christ's also has a scholar's ballot - if you get a first in your exams, you "unlock" a special set of rooms in room ballots for later years.

FOOD

Hall food tastes generally okay. £3 - £4 for a vegetarian main, £4 - £5 pounds for a meat main. Sides and the salad bar are free flow, which is rare for a college and definitely uncommon among the central colleges! You can also just order the sides, including pasta, salad and cold meats, and it'll be cheaper. There is also the buttery that sells sandwiches and snacks and the bar for drinks.

LOCATION

City Centre

SIZE

410 undergrads, 250 postgrads
6 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£1418 - £1811 per term

PROS

Location is very good - 1 door opens to Tesco's, 1 to Sainsbury's, 1 to a hoard of restaurants and the market square, and 1 out the back to the river and Jesus College. Has a reputation to be more academic (supervisors are very good). There's also a really strong Singaporean community! (The admissions tutor usually goes to Singapore and Malaysia to recruit students.)

CONS

Hall food can get quite repetitive, but you can always go to other colleges to eat; with its prime location most colleges are only a few minutes' walk away. Having to move out during term breaks for category A rooms can be quite the hassle, but only around half the cohort lives in category A.

churchill

ACCOM

All onsite for undergrad, staircases look the same except for Cowan Court which is the newest and most expensive. There is a choice of ensuite or non-ensuite through the ballot system, where everyone ranks their top 5 preferred rooms. In first year you cannot pick the specific room as the ballot has already ended; you can only pick the band (price, ensuite/non-ensuite) of room you want to stay in. You can stay over the holidays but you may have to move to another room.

FOOD

Generally around £3 for mains, £0.95 for sides and £1.50 for desserts. There's a salad bar and a buttery which serves drinks, pizza and sandwiches. Usually takes into account most diets and special needs (i.e. vegan, vegetarian, halal options)

OTHER

You can walk on the grass here! The lawns are really pretty and people can study outside on the grass in easter. There is a gym (no need to pay additional membership fee), tennis courts, basketball courts, huge playing field, squash courts, dance studio.

LOCATION

Hill college, easy access to West Cambridge sites

SIZE

450 undergrads, 280 postgrads
1 Singaporean per year

RENT

£1567 - £2426 per term

PROS

Good professors and supervisors who know their stuff, and generally quiet at night since it's outside the city centre! Rooms are relatively large.

CONS

Hall food might not be the best (depends on your taste) but it can be cheap especially with the no food waste movement (£1 meal if you go after 7.10pm). Few Singaporeans in college, but we are close to Medwards, Trinity Hall, Fitzwilliam and St. Edmund's, so it's still easy to find ppl to cook with!

clare

ACCOM

3 years guaranteed accommodation, freshers all stay on-site on Memorial Court. First year accommodation is known to be very big and good, but you have to move out every term. There is storage for international students for £25, but the space is not very big and can be a slight hassle if you get allocated to an upper shelf space. From second year onwards most people stay at Castle Court (offsite) and you have the option of a 9-month license. Second year ballot is random and the order is reversed for third year; you can choose to group ballot although it's quite hard to get. Both ensuite and shared bathroom options. Laundry is not free.

FOOD

Buttery food is quite affordable (£2.20 for veg main, £2.80 for meat main, £0.68 per side) but portion sizes tend to be small/inconsistent. Food is decent but rice, most (interpretations of) Asian food and hashbrowns during Saturday brunches are **not** recommended. Formals are £10.20 but the food generally isn't amazing. They are also going to open a cafe next year. Kitchen facilities are decent (kettle, microwave, toaster, hobs, fridge) but no freezer/ovens. Rice cookers are technically not allowed but this is not strictly enforced.

PROS

The college is really pretty (everyone thinks the stock photos of Cambridge is of King's but the building is actually Clare!) and has a smaller, cozier feel compared to larger/grander colleges. Free punts and very nice to picnic in the summer. There were a lot of construction works but most of it is finishing so you should get to enjoy Clare in its full glory.
Location is good - central enough to conveniently walk to most places, but sort of "tucked behind" the famous colleges like King's and Trinity such that it's not swarmed by tourists. Known for being a musical college - very good chapel choir, orchestra, weekly lunchtime concerts + evening concerts, many talented music students.

LOCATION

Quite central, usually a bit less so from 2nd year onwards but generally 10-15min walk to city centre. Next to University Library.

SIZE

~140
0-3 Singaporeans per year

CONS

Although Clare is known to be the "friendly" college, it isn't very welcoming towards international students - both in terms of the (mostly local and not very diverse) student community and support from the college/profs etc. If finding a Singaporean community in Cambridge is important to you you'll have to look outside of college. Funding is quite limited - you only get £300 for research/travel purposes across all your years of study.

OTHER

Clare is quite big on sustainability which is good (there are vegan formals, veganuary etc if that's your sort of thing) but will potentially cause your room to be very cold (they are always trying to minimise heating to reduce carbon footprint)

corpus christi

ACCOM

Fees depend on a ranking system that takes into account the size of the room and other factors such as location, noise and facilities.
Both termly and continuous licences are available for most rooms. However, there are many rooms on the main site that are termly licence only, so if you take a continuous licence you will probably be living offsite (although that generally still means right next to the college).
Most accommodation in Corpus is not ensuite.
Most accommodation in Corpus also does not have proper cooking facilities apart from a few places (which are therefore highly sought-after).

FOOD

Food is priced at £2.75 a main, £0.75 a side and £1.25 for dessert. Salads are available at £0.65 and £1.10 for a small and large bowl.
Food is generally good, as the College employs the head chef of the University Arms Hotel.
NOTE: A Kitchen Fixed Charge is included in the rent, so effectively you're paying about £2 a day on top of what you spend (even if you don't eat in the dining hall!)
Formals are twice a week, at about £11 for Corpus students and £14 for guests. Gowns must be worn.

LOCATION

Very central! Most importantly, it is across the street from Jack's Gelato.

SIZE

90 UGs
0-3 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£1523 - £2389/term (termly licence)
£2006 - £3145 (continuous)

PROS

Corpus is the 2nd-smallest college! This means that you know almost everyone in your year (and probably in other years too!) In most people's experience, Corpus is a super friendly college and you'll find many people to vibe with there.
You also find that Corpus lacks almost nothing! Food's good, location is very central and due to its small size, it's also quite rich in terms of money-per-capita.
Corpus has an amazing theatre scene. It owns its own Playroom (the biggest university theatre venue behind the University theatre, the ADC theatre, itself!) and there are many students who are passionate about theatre.

CONS

"Lacks almost nothing" is quantified because Corpus lacks two main things: proper cooking facilities, and a vibrant music scene (or even good music facilities beyond the chapel choir).

OTHER

Laundry is free! Corpus is quite rich so there's quite a bit of funding for a lot of things (travel/internship grants etc).
Corpus is a landlord for both the Eagle (the touristy pub where Watson and Crick announced their discovery of the double-helix DNA structure) and Jack's Gelato (some of the BEST ice cream in Cambridge) which are both right next to the College (and right below some of the accommodation!)

downing

ACCOM

First year accommodation is mostly en-suite. Second and third year is about half en-suite and half shared bathrooms, though in many cases you only share the bathroom with 1-2 (at most 4) other people. There is long-lease for 38 weeks in 2nd and 3rd year, but the college almost always allows internationals to stay over the holidays, although in some cases in a different room (if your original room was short-lease). Quality of accommodation is good, with fully equipped kitchens and in some cases hotel-standard rooms (because the college operates these rooms as a hotel during the holidays).

FOOD

Hall food is reasonably priced (~3.75 a meal), and there is a cafe serving sandwiches and cakes. The kitchens are very good, with ovens, fridges and freezers, so it is very possible to cook all your meals. It is also near a lot of Asian food, if you want to eat out.

OTHER

It is one of the colleges that you can apply to if you are applying for a Jardine scholarship.

LOCATION

Very central, ~5 mins to market square

SIZE

~140 per year
2 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£130 - £220 per week for 1st years

PROS

The location and the accommodation is fantastic. Has large open grounds that are nice to walk through. The porters are very friendly. The cafe and library are good study spaces with different vibes.

CONS

There are very few Singaporeans, which is slightly surprising given that the college's strengths are in law, medicine and engineering, and that it is one of the colleges that Jardine scholarship holders may apply to. It is not an issue since it is easy to meet other Singaporeans, though it does mean that there isn't always the bulk number for Chinese food takeaways or impromptu gatherings.

emmanuel

ACCOM

3 main locations for first years: Old South (bad rooms, noise from constructions, but very social), New South (good hotel-like rooms, but not very social), and North Court (sizeable rooms, healthy amount of socialising, but has noise from the bus-stop for certain staircases, and away from centre of college). Most of them are not en-suite, unless you get New South (but it will be grade 6 and above). You can indicate your preferred location (South/North) and grade, and choose which one is your main consideration. The college will allocate you your room.

FOOD

Hall is about £4 - £5. Good quality, can get slightly repetitive sometimes but it is very convenient.

OTHER

There is a Harvard exchange (PRISE programme) for ~7 selected nat sci/medics in the summer, with a good amount of stipend.

PROS

The only college with laundry done for you. Free laundry if you want to do it yourself too.

One of the nicest looking colleges with a paddock and a 24/7 library that many people envy.

Emma people are very friendly people in general.

Cute ducks.

LOCATION

Central, Less than 5 min walk to Downing Site. Opposite Grand Arcade Shopping mall.

SIZE

~150-170 per year
3 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£153 - £240 per week

fitzwilliam

ACCOM

All 1st year students will stay on-site. Their accommodation is minimally semi en-suite (shared toilets but will have showers and basins inside their rooms). Blocks A-C are newly refurbished and are relatively modern. Non-refurbished blocks are older but possibly bigger in size. There is also an option to choose a "quiet" flat, where you can stay with people who will presumably make less noise at night.

In 2nd year, you have to enter a ballot to stay in "houses" (off-site accommodation, but most near from college) or in on-site flats. Recommended to find a group of people to ballot with for off-site houses; the 2nd years generally get the last pick for on-site flats & some blocks/flats are old and rather unpleasant.

In 3rd year, you will have to stay in on-college flats again; but this time, you will get priority in the ballot to choose your rooms, which are pretty good.

Fitz offers 3 types of accommodation contracts - 1 that allows you to stay through the entire year (barring summer), another that allows you to stay only during term time and another where you can stay during term time AND easter break.

International students get storage space in the College's squash court across ALL breaks (including summer), as long as you move your belongings in before a specified date.

LOCATION

One of the few hill colleges. About 10–15-min cycle to city centre. 10-minute cycle to West Hub (Computer Science etc.) There is also an Aldi's about 5 minutes away from Fitz, which sells groceries at cheap prices.

SIZE

750-800 total, 300 PGs
2-3 Singaporeans per year

FOOD

The buttery serves lunch and dinner every weekday, with breakfast on Wed mornings. On Saturday, there will be brunch and dinners, while Sunday has brunch/lunch but no dinner. Café is open from 7am-5pm everyday (hours might vary on weekends) & serves hot food and drinks, and tis converted into a bar after dinner. Prices at the café are very reasonable, the same cannot be said of buttery prices (4 pounds for 1 main + 1 side).

RENT

£134 - £202/week

PROS

Fitz has lovely people - there is a good proportion of international students as well as state school students, and most are extremely friendly. Strong sporting culture, and does well in major competitions such as the football cuppers (champions for the past 5 years at least) and leagues. Gorgeous, well-maintained gardens. Spacious library (4 floors, with a monitor room). Gym is well-maintained and much better than most colleges. Can walk on the grass. Away from city centre - no hassle from tourists or non-students in general. LKY studied here.

CONS

Distance - could be draining to attend society events etc. when you must scale up and down a hill to meet most other people. You will probably have to leave college to meet other friends.

They turned off heating from 12 - 5am last year to "cut costs" despite strong opposition.

Architecture is not what one would expect of Cambridge.

OTHER

Fitz has a huge playing field along Oxford Road (about 10 minutes walk), which can be used to play football, rugby, cricket etcetera. It also has tennis courts that are free for use for Fitz students.bWithin the college site, Fitz has a squash court, a 2-floor gym that is open from 7am - 12am, a badminton court (only available one day of the week), a games room (with Xbox/PS4 etc.) and a JCR that has a pool table and a screen to watch movies/sporting events.

girton

ACCOM

Girton has 470 undergraduate rooms, of which 200 are en-suite, and 190 postgraduate rooms, 170 of which are en-suite. The college has two main residential areas: main college site and Swirles court. Swirles court was built in 2017 so it has new facilities, all ensuite rooms and ridiculously big kitchens. There is Citibus outside the college and Ubus right by Swirles court. There is also a very big Sainsbury's by Swirles court.

All the non-ensuite accommodations in Girton are priced the same, disregarding their different grades. The allocation of the room is based on the balloting system. The tenancy is normally around 37 or 38 weeks, depending on term dates. No residence during the 2-week Christmas closure but rooms do not have to be cleared. Summer vacation accommodation is usually available at Swirles Court.

FOOD

Hall food is standard, normally costs £4 for meat and £3.5 for vegetarian/vegan options. There are good days and bad days but it is definitely always edible. There are rumours that Girton stole a chef from Pembroke so the food is definitely getting better. The chef has a lot of creative ideas but the execution sometimes fluctuates.

OTHER

Girton has a heated indoor swimming pool. Most kitchens are decently equipped with standard kitchen facilities (ovens, induction cooker, microwave, etc). Because Girton is far from the city centre, it is a big college. The main college site stands in 50 acres of mature woods, parkland, and formal gardens, a really relaxing and peaceful place to be.

LOCATION

Hill college, arguably the furthest away from city centre (15min of cycling). However, it is close to West Camb and Vet school.

SIZE

500 UGs, 280 PGs
1-2 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£204 per week (non-ensuite)
£213 per week (ensuite)

gonville & caius

ACCOM

First year is all ensuite off site. Nice accommodation at Harvey Court and Stephen Hawking building. You can opt for continuous rental for the whole year at a cheaper price, or else you will have to clear your room after each term. There are also rooms exclusively reserved for international students with big kitchens and nice bathrooms. 3rd years can live in the college main site with old architecture.

FOOD

Food has gotten better since the catering changed, and is quite cheap. There are three different types of halls; cafeteria, first hall (very fast), and formal hall where you are served.

OTHER

Caius has MDR so you pay for 32 or 36 meals each term beforehand. If you don't eat that many meals in hall, your money goes to waste.

LOCATION

Very central, next to market square and close to Sainsbury's. About 5 min walk to the Babbage lecture theatre & less than 10 min walk to Downing site. 1st year accommodation is close to Sidgwick Site.

SIZE

~150-200/year
3 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£187 - £203/week

PROS

Beautiful and very central, close to everything.

CONS

Not as big as some of the other colleges in land. There are no ensuites in 2nd and 3rd year.

homerton

ACCOM

Most rooms in college are ensuite. All first-years live in West House which is all ensuite. International students pay rent for all three terms upfront at the start of Michaelmas. For staying over the holiday, you pay rent right before the end of term; rate is the same as termtime and you can stay as many nights as you want.

LOCATION

30min walk/10-15min cycle from city centre, 10min walk from railway station, right next to the faculty of education.

SIZE

190 UGs per year
1-3 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£140/week as of 2022

FOOD

Mains are from £2-3 and sides are £0.50-£1.50. There are also desserts (£1.50-£2), salads (buffet style for £1.50 a bowl) and sandwiches. There are vegan options every day. A lot of students cook especially because there are 4 supermarkets just down Hills Road including an Asian supermarket. Note that there is a minimum meal charge of £30, which is charged in the accommodation invoice, but it can be quite easily spent because the same portal is used to pay for formals.

OTHER

About 80% of hom students own a bike, but there is a bus stop right outside college that links to city centre and faculty/dept sites (single trip £1 or £2.80 depending on distance).

Homerton is one of the colleges offering the new Foundation Year in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences programme (starting in 2023)

hughes hall

ACCOM

Various bands on-site (within college compound) and off-site (houses outside college), depending on size and whether room is en-suite.
Generally, only first-year students are able to get accommodation on-site.

FOOD

Served at the dining hall located in the Fenners' Building. Dining hall opens for breakfast, lunch and dinner on weekdays, and brunch only for weekends.
For lunch/dinner, mains are around £3.4 for non-meat options and £4.5 for meat-options. Sides are around 55p per serving. Salads, sandwiches and dessert options are also available. Choices are limited, so quite a number of students eat out or cook (Hughes Hall has well-equipped kitchens).
The most popular item is brunch on weekends. English breakfast is served (the usual eggs, bacon, sausage, beans, etc.), with generous portions starting at £2.95 for basic options.

OTHER

College has a Middle Common Room (MCR) - sort of a student arm of the college which organises events and support. There is also a student-run bar in college.

LOCATION

Slightly outside Cambridge city centre, nearer to Cambridge Train Station

SIZE

100 UGs, 400 UGs
10-15 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£168 - £234/week (on-site)
£124 - £193/week (off-site)

PROS

Large international student cohort. Porters are generally relaxed. Kitchen facilities are large and excellent, with hobs, ovens and proper dining table for most room bands.

CONS

There aren't many facilities and the college is quite small.

king's

ACCOM

There are en-suite options, and all 1st years will stay on the main site. There are options for long lease and short lease.

LOCATION

Centre of Cambridge, King's Parade

SIZE

120 per year
1-2 Singaporeans per year

FOOD

Mains are around £3 and sides are £1, although apparently inflation has been hitting the kitchen hard. Menus are released every week and sent to all the student emails, so that should provide all relevant information including mealtimes etc. Some have stated that the servery provides strong motivation to develop their culinary skills.

RENT

£1459-1900/term (termly licence)
£1649 - £2493/term (continuous)

PROS

Amazing accommodation and great kitchens. Right in the city centre. Living next to a historical building (the college chapel!) is quite an experience. The college is also really big on diversity and inclusivity, and so the people you meet in King's may expand your worldview beyond the more typically-asian conservative ideas that one tends to encounter in Singapore.

CONS

Dining hall food could really be better! Also college can be quite corporate-minded sometimes, so during the holidays King's essentially turns into a conference venue. Surprisingly tourists are not that big of a bother, but it does mean that you have to show the porters your camcard everytime you access college via the main gate.

OTHER

King's has its own entrepreneurship lab which it devotes a lot of resources to! its genuinely very well-run, and hosts some very high-profile speakers (e.g. the CEO of rolls-royce) so if entrepreneurship is something you're into, their lab hosts a competition each year where the winner gets 20k of seed funding and guidance.

lucy cavendish

ACCOM

There is a wide variety of accommodation options including houses and the typical dorm room corridor type of buildings. Oldham hall has 'sets' which means two people share a toilet and a small kitchen. De Brye, Warbuton and Bertram are the corridor style en suite rooms with 6 people on a floor sharing a kitchen. There are also houses (Whinside, Fossedene, Strathaird) which operate like a real house where there's a kitchen and living room, but everyone has their own private room. Toilets are shared for houses and it tends to be more social due to the shared living areas. There is a new building containing all single en suite rooms. All first years are on site, and second years are a mix (some are offsite in Wolfson Court or Histon Road). For 3rd years it is still uncertain as the college is expanding so new arrangements may be in place. All leases are 9 months long so you have to pay in the holidays even if you go home. On the bright side, it is convenient because you don't need to move your things for the whole year.

FOOD

Food in the dining hall is decent but can get boring. Serves lunch and dinner every day except weekends where there is no dinner. On Saturdays, there is brunch and on Sundays, Sunday roast! There's also a great cafe in Warbuton hall for cakes/ coffee etc and a new cafe in the recently opened building.

LOCATION

Sort of a hill college but the lowest on the hill and off to the left; 15-20min walk to Sidgwick; 12min to Sainsburys; 15min to market square; 10-15min to Aldis.

SIZE

140 UGs per year
4-5 Singaporeans per year

PROS

It's far enough from the city centre such that it's nice and quiet at night without hearing ambulances/ yelling etc. At the same time it's not too far from the city centre and Sidgwick so you can easily walk anywhere within 15 minutes, although a lot of people do cycle. Said to have the nicest porters; very chill and helpful, not mean or excessively strict. Lucy also has fun events like free ice cream from ice cream trucks and a petting zoo one year.

CONS

The location is not the most central so if you really don't like walking or your department is far (Downing/ engineering) you may need to bike around. It's also not a rich college so the rent is on the higher side.

OTHER

Lucy is changing rapidly as they only recently became a mixed gender college and the number of students they intake is much larger too.

magdalene

ACCOM

There's a good mix of on and off-site accommodation. The newest rooms are at Cripps Court, which is off-site (the site is further divided into Cripps and Edwards Court). The rooms are all quite nice; Cripps is also where the music room and cardio gym are located. Basing House is only for freshers and it's also off-site (very well located though!); it has very nice kitchens with ovens. The rooms vary in quality (there are no en-suites), but Basing is generally a nice place to be. A lot of freshers also end up at Thompsons Lane, which is a row of 7 houses owned by the college (also off-site). It's definitely the party place (especially 30 Thompsons Lane, which is the biggest house). The on-site accommodation is mainly in the Village (Mallory Court, Benson Court, etc) - the sizes and quality of the rooms/kitchens/etc vary considerably. A lot of freshers are placed in Benson Court. Benson Court does not have any en-suite rooms and the kitchens are small but it's got a very lovely vibe, pretty views, and it's a great place to be if you want to get to know other freshers without having to put up with late-night parties in your halls. If you want en-suite rooms, opting for Cripps Court would be a safe choice (although there are other en-suite rooms scattered around College). Prices are generally reasonable throughout College - you can indicate your preference. Sometimes you can get lucky and get a decent room for a low price band - so lower rent does not necessarily mean it's a worse room! Band C and D are safe options. Pretty much all the rooms are available over the holidays (College always tries to accommodate everyone), but if you live at Cripps you might be asked to move to another room during the holidays.

LOCATION

Quite central - 3 min walk to Sainsburys; 20 min walk to Sidgwick site; 6 mins to market square.

SIZE

1-3 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£145.04 - £216.93 per week

FOOD

Not very good, but they're trying their best. It's £3.50 for a meal (lunch and dinner). You can get add-ons (fruit, a drink, dessert) and make it £5 (I think). Brunch on the weekends is £4.50. No breakfast. Food is served during the holidays too (except for a few weeks around Christmas).

PROS

The people. Location. Wonderful director of studies.

CONS

The food could be better (at least it's relatively cheap). You have to carry your laundry pretty far if you're off-site - there are only three laundry rooms (Cripps, Benson Court, 30 Thompsons Lane)

OTHER

The new library is very nice! College grounds are smaller and less impressive than some other Colleges (e.g. Johns and Trinity). If you do Law, you'll have an amazing Director of Studies (Professor Jones) - everyone loves him.

murray edwards

ACCOM

First year accommodation is all en-suite and all freshers live together in the same building called Pearl House. Licenses for rooms are 31 weeks. For other years, you ballot for your rooms through a random ballot and the facilities and costs vary greatly.

FOOD

Meat main: £3-£4 depending on what you choose, each side: £0.75, so every meal is ~£4.50 average. The dome's opening hours are quite short with ~1 hour for lunch and dinner so sometimes you might miss it if you have supervisions during that timing. Supposedly has "Cambridge's best brunch" on weekends and the first year accoms have really modern and spacious kitchens with ovens.

OTHER

Medwards is an all female college. There is a gateway programme funding where you can attend talks throughout the year to accumulate credits and apply for summer funds (£150-£450 depending on number of people applying) to do anything to challenge yourself / for self development.

LOCATION

Hill college, ~20-25 minutes walk to city centre / market square, ~10 minute walk to Aldi, closer to West Cambridge than most colleges (Computer Science dept etc)

SIZE

100 per year
1-3 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£1,724 per term

PROS

An all female college may help to smoothen the transition to a foreign country as you're in a very comfortable environment. Medwards is also very friendly and on the liberal side (we don't have grass where only fellows can walk on).

CONS

Some people might prefer the quiet and peaceful surroundings but being in a hill college does mean a lot of walking / cycling to meet friends in the city centre or to go for lectures. Chinese food will be quite a reach. Being in an all female college also means that you get to interact a lot less with male friends.

newnham

ACCOM

You can pick a termly (need to move everything out during holidays) or continuous license (stay during the holidays) - either option is available for all buildings except Dorothy Garrod (newest and most modern) which only has a limited number of continuous rooms. For 2nd year everyone is randomly ranked and choose rooms in that order, and this order is reversed for 3rd year - so if you were last in 2nd year you'll pick first in 3rd year (3rd years go first though). 1st years get the leftover rooms so they don't live together in a building, but generally all the rooms are decent especially if you get a pretty garden-facing room (some even have couches!). During the room ballot in Feb there will be a giant pdf with pics of all the rooms/kitchens sent around so you can get a sense of what they look like! If you have accessibility/faith needs, college can also arrange you to get a room with specific facilities.

FOOD

Buttery is decent! Menu is mostly different everyday and sent out weekly. There is always a meat, fish, veggie and vegan option with mains being £2.85-3.15 and sides £0.85. They do all lunches/dinners and brunch on weekends (the waffles are super good). Meals are paid for using credit that you choose at the start of the year, but if you go over that amount it gets added to your college bill. All Newnham kitchens are super well equipped - all of them have hobs and ovens!! Newnham also has a cafe with coffee/tea/sandwiches/snacks and is open to anyone (gets really busy during term with people studying / chilling after being at Sidgwick site).

LOCATION

Not super central but right next to Sidgwick site, about 10-15 min to the city centre/Downing site by foot and 5 minutes from the UL.

SIZE

1-3 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£175 per week

PROS

College is really pretty and you can walk on the grass - picnics are popular and it's nice to just sit in the garden (you might have supervisions there). If fruit/veggies are grown in the garden you can take them! Someone once took a whole pumpkin. Porters & staff in general are super friendly - no matter how many times you lock yourself out of your room or how many parcels they have to keep for you. Gym is good, air conditioned with most equipment. Location is good if your faculty is at Sidgwick site or if you wanna be away from busy central areas but not too far away from things.

CONS

Female colleges might not be for everyone. Slightly annoying that there are limited continuous rooms - 3rd years are usually guaranteed to get them but as an international student a termly licence is less feasible.

Some complaints about first years not having a building for themselves, but this does allow you to meet people from other years. There is also no group balloting so it might be hard to be near friends with different ballot positions, but everything is on site so any room would be <5min away.

OTHER

All female college. Library is great for studying - there is a modern section that is nice and bright, and an older section for vibes with a cool ceiling. Super well stocked with books for most subjects because women weren't allowed into the main library until at least the 1890s. Also laundry is free - this was a COVID policy that they continued through 2022, fingers crossed they keep it that way! For the summer holiday, you are guaranteed 4 boxes (each up to 20kg) of international storage - you don't need to fight for limited space! No chapel; shared with Selwyn's.

pembroke

LOCATION

Very central, close to Sainsbury's. Also close to the engineering/architecture department, Judge Business School, New Museum Site and Downing Site!

ACCOM

Most rooms have a sink, shared bathroom and shared kitchen.

SIZE

130 per year

FOOD

Great value for money, good variety and very tasty! The catering staff are also very friendly!

RENT

£121.90 - £187.44 / week

PROS

Beautiful gardens! Never has too many tourists (which is great!). Pembroke is a medium size college which makes socialising, trips to the library and lunch/dinner breaks easier and more convenient! Has a reasonable number of people to acquaint and at the same time not feel too claustrophobic or isolated!

The library is lovely, respectful and quiet space to study!

The staff/cleaners/porters are, always friendly and happy to help out! They really do make a difference in making Pembroke a warm and welcoming environment.

This section was not written by a Singaporean/Malaysian.

peterhouse

ACCOM

12 different bands available where usually the bigger rooms and en-suite rooms are more expensive. Room licence runs for 10 weeks per term for most rooms, though some come with an extended licence to stay in the holidays. Storage is usually provided for international undergrads for free. First-years are housed together in SPT/ WSB which are on-site, but second year onwards accommodation is on/off-site. This is picked based on a random ballot. First-years also have very limited kitchen facilities which usually consists of a kettle, microwave, toaster and fridge.

LOCATION

Central college, near Downing site and Fitzwilliam Museum. ~7 minute walk from market square and ~10 min walk from Sainsbury's

SIZE

70 per year
2 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£1031 - £1306 per term

FOOD

Food is fairly decent. Catering staff are very friendly and are happy to cater to various dietary requirements - vegan, vegetarian, etc. There is usually at least one vegan option everyday and Peterhouse has one of the most decent college brunches on Saturdays. It is priced similarly to most colleges, where a main and a side would cost about £3.10 pounds. Formals though are one of the cheapest (£7.20 for a college member and £11.74 for a guest). In addition, there is a compulsory spend of £105/term for servery meals/ formals.

PROS

Peterhouse staff are great in terms of friendliness and efficiency.

CONS

Peterhouse being a very small college is more 'cliquey' than other colleges and has a much more prominent 'cancel culture' than other colleges. Additionally, given the fact that it has very few international students (non-EU) let alone Singaporeans, it can be harder to integrate.

OTHER

Washing and dryer facilities are available around the college. Washing costs £1.40 per cycle and the dryer costs £1 per cycle. Libraries are decent as well for studying if you are tired of your room and cafes.

queens

ACCOM

Most freshers are allocated to the same building (Cripps Court, the newest building) which offers both en-suite and private bathroom (only you have access to it but it's just across your room). Queens' offers long-leases, but sometimes they offer room buy-backs during the holidays(meaning you get paid!)
The accommodations in the older buildings varies a little more, and most have shared bathrooms. Room ballots are random within the same year group, but 1st years are given priority for Cripps.
Most undergrads are offered on-site accommodation, but there is offsite accommodation at Owlstone Croft for postgrads and some unlucky undergrads.
Queens' offers summer storage for international undergrads.

FOOD

Unfortunately, no onsite accommodation has ovens, and there is a master switch that needs to be reset every 7 min when cooking. (Queens' is very strict on fire safety). So it can be inconvenient to cook big meals.
However, Queens' catering food is affordable at £3.75 (1 main 2 sides). They do put in effort in varying the food, and host special themes every thursday. They offer brunch and dinner only during weekends, and Sunday Brunch is really nice!
Formals are a little on the more expensive side(£14), no reception, & BYOB. The 3 course meal is decent most of the time.

LOCATION

Pretty central;
9 min to Sainsbury's
6min to market square
Bus stop right outside to the train station

SIZE

130 per year
1-2 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£1900 per term (private)
£2300 per term (ensuite)

PROS

Queens' is located along the river and has chill vibes to relax along the river. It is near to the city centre, yet tucked nicely at the edge. It is peaceful yet convenient. Large proportion of international students, so you feel welcomed immediately once you arrive there. One of the friendliest colleges, and the student body is closely-knit (as a result of the deliberate effort to house all freshers together to socialise). College staff are very accommodating, and the maintenance crew is very responsive as well.

CONS

Queens' has a small land size, so it is rather "crowded" with no fancy/massive lawns. The library is pretty small and very ordinary, and most of the fancy old buildings and rooms are out of bounds for students. In a sense it is a waste of space since there are 2 buildings for the same purpose. (Old Library vs New library, Old Hall vs Cripps Dining Hall etc.) Not a very nice JCR room(but they are planning to renovate it) and the college bar is pretty boring too.

OTHER

Free washing and dryer facilities around the college!! Your rooms are also cleaned every 2 weeks. There are many travel grants available even for international students, as long as your trip helps in your educational growth.

robinson

ACCOM

In general, freshers will get allocated either ensuite rooms or rooms where 2 occupants share one toilet. There are no long-leases, but the college is fairly flexible about allowing students to stay extra nights during the holiday. Students pay per night for every extra night.

LOCATION

3 minutes walk from university library and 5 minutes walk from Sidgwick site. 10 minute bike ride to market square.

SIZE

120 per year
2 Singaporeans per year

FOOD

Food is fairly good and sold at a fair price. There is always at least 1 vegan option. The weekend brunch is also a very good deal (6 items, coffee/tea/other drink, croiscant/toast for £3.50).

RENT

£2025 - £2425 per term

OTHER

Reception is fairly bad.

PROS

The college staff are very accommodating, especially if you are an international student (and need extra accommodation etc.)

CONS

Small endowment fund, so rent is expensive.

st. catharine's

ACCOM

First and third year accommodation is mostly on-site; 8 room bands with band 7 & 8 being the most expensive and the only en-suite rooms. 2nd years live at Chad's in flats of 4-5 people – all rooms are bands 5 and 6, two people share one bathroom, shared kitchen (with an oven, while all main site kitchens only have microwaves) and living room. 1st year contracts are all short contracts, so you have to move to another room if you stay Over the holidays, 4-5 flats at Chad's are available for long contracts (but all flatmates have to opt for the same type of contract), third years can choose rooms with long contract option. 2nd year ballot is random and reversed for 3rd year.

FOOD

Hall food is reasonably priced – £3.50 for one meat main and one side; breakfast served 7.30-9.00am on weekdays and 7.30-9.30am on weekends, lunch 12.30-1.30pm, dinner 6.00-7.00pm. Sunday brunch is free if you attend chapel service beforehand Free coffee/tea and cakes at tea every Wed. Formals are £14 for students and £18.50 for guests, twice a week, and come with cheese and port.

PROS

Pretty campus and good location; people (students, staff, porters, housekeeping, etc.) are nice and friendly, vibes are chill; not a lot of Singaporeans but not necessarily a bad thing as there are many international students from China, HK, Belgium, France, etc. + the Brits are generally friendly too! (Catz is known as the friendliest college). Lots of welfare initiatives and pastoral care – welfare walks, free welfare packs, tea@3, pebble painting, wed yoga (Catz spends the most on welfare!) Very good diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) support.

LOCATION

Very central; 5 min to market square, 10 min to main's, Regent St and Sidgwick;
Chad's is nearer to Sidgwick, 15 min to market square

SIZE

140 per year
1-2 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£1266 - £2416 per term

CONS

Lots of construction both on main site and Chad's that will likely continue until 2025 or later, facilities in some main site accoms are quite old but should be renovated in coming years (e.g. rooms, toilets, and kitchens in Hobsons and unrenovated Sherlock Court blocks).

OTHER

Not a lot of funding/bursaries available for international students, but you can apply for travel grants quite easily (e.g. £500 for an MML trip to Berlin)

st. edmund's

ACCOM

Wide variety of rooms, all of which are on site; room bands range from 1 to 12. Kitchens are shared between ~8 students in a flat. Kitchens are also fully kitted out, with ovens, stoves, large fridges etc.

Bands 1 to 5: smaller rooms, not en-suite

Bands 6 to 9: medium-sized rooms, en-suite, some rooms are in Mount Pleasant Halls, which are new accommodations with double beds.

Bands 10 to 12: studio flats with own kitchenette and en-suite, with double bed in Mount Pleasant Halls

All first-year undergraduates are guaranteed on-site accommodation, and in subsequent years the accommodation portal is open earlier for current students to have their pick at accommodation. Rooms do not have to be vacated during the breaks in-between terms. Not possible to choose flatmates or rooms (sans extenuating circumstances and accessibility requirements).

FOOD

Hall food can be quite pricey, at around £7.00 for one main and two sides, and there is a Kitchen Minimum Billing of £140/term. It is recommended to cook if you are on a tight budget, and this is easier since you are near to Aldi's, Iceland, and an Asian supermarket.

Formals are more expensive, at about £28.50 with alcohol, and £22.50 without.

PROS

Arguably one of the colleges with the best vibes. If you are intimidated by the glitz and grandeur of other colleges, St Edmund's is more homely, informal, and laid-back. As a hill college, it is much quieter. The Eddie's Bar is also one of the best bars in the entire uni, with immaculate vibes and a friendly, upbeat atmosphere (especially on Fridays). Close to Huntingdon Road Surgery, which is the college's preferred GP. Large SG community, given that it is a mature college and takes in students above 21. There is an on-site cafe called Edspressos that serves cheap coffee, cakes, and snacks. Lastly, you can walk on the grass.

LOCATION

Hill College, 15-20 min walk to the city centre and Market Square. Less than 10 minute walk to Aldi's, and closer to West Cambridge and Sidgwick Site

SIZE

50 per year
20 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£1706 - £2624 per term

CONS

The college is a bit on the poorer side, so it is difficult to acquire financial support.

Welfare and pastoral care provided by the College can be a bit lackadaisical. Without a bike, commuting to other faculties, sites, and the city centre can take some time. Not many food options available nearby.

Some facilities are not the best (e.g. library - small and dated, gym - also small and dated, equipment not working well).

OTHER

St Edmund's College is a mature college, which means it takes in older undergraduates, and more postgraduates and doctoral students. The undergraduate community will thus be on the smaller side, but it also means that it is more closely-knit (if you interact and mingle with the community). The CR is not split into JCR or MCR. The college grounds are NOT gated; however, doors are keycard access only, as are bike sheds and other facilities.

trinity

ACCOM

In 1st year, you can for accommodation by band. You can also indicate specific accessibility requirements and other preferences (e.g. en-suite). First years live in Angel Court, Blue Boar Court and the Wolfson building (generally in increasing order of price). Wolfson has kitchens with ovens and is the only 1st-year en-suite accom. Some (but not all) Blue Boar Court rooms have kitchens, while only Blue Boar I has ovens. Angel Court does not have cooking facilities.

In 2nd/3rdyear, you ballot for specific rooms and get allocated a room based on your position on the ballot. For 2nd year, this is completely random. For 3rd year, you get higher priority if you got a Class 1 (first) in your first year exams.

Some rooms are around the college courts (New Court, Great Court; typically non-ensuite); some are designed in modern flat style (Wolfson Building); others are low-rise houses (Burrell's Field, tucked next to the Fellow's Garden). There is also housing above the shops along Sidney St (Blue Boar, Pearce Hostel) and Trinity St (Angel Court).

Long leases for the summer are available.

FOOD

Food is pretty above-average (for the UK...) and at a good price. You can get lunch/dinner at ~£3.5/4. Sunday brunch is about £6. Regular formals happen twice a week except Easter term (~£12 for Trin students/ £18 for guests). 21-year-olds and above (i.e. NS guys) are automatically enrolled in the BA society, entitling you to BA formals and related events (i.e. free food).

PROS

It's an incredibly beautiful college. You get a deep sense of history walking the grounds (statues/paintings of Newton, Bacon, Byron, the old architectural style).

The college has significant financial resources that trickle down to students through funds, society budgets, cheaper accommodation, free counselling, etc.

Location is really central, making it great for getting around - there really isn't a need to buy a bike if you're at Trinity in 1st year.

LOCATION

Very central: <5 min from market square and Sainsbury's, <10min from Regent St for all 1st-year accommodation and nearly all accommodation in other years

SIZE

220+ per year
5 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£136 - £202 per week

CONS

Because of large cohort size, Trinity can come across as more impersonal than other colleges sometimes - there is definitely a weaker sense of college community than elsewhere if that matters to you. Trinity students also have a reputation among other colleges for being snobby/uptight - may not be true for everyone but it's something to be aware of.

OTHER

A lot of funding for different things (e.g. the Dunlevie fund for holidays essentially, studentships for research in second year, annual subsidies to buy sporting or IT equipment, book fund)

Trinity attracts a great number of STEM students because of its historical reputation - though you do have people doing every course here. However the oversubscription in STEM means that STEM applicants may be "pooled" to another college. Large majority of guys (7 guys : 3 gals) because of a tendency for STEM students to apply, if that matters to you. Some porters have a reputation for being gruff, especially towards non-Trinity visitors. Many of them are ex-military. This is not really a problem aside from the occasional unpleasant experience. As a Trinity student, just be polite to them and your life will be easier.

wolfson

ACCOM

There are 7 bands, but 5-7 are reserved for couples/families. Vast majority of rooms are in band 3. Majority of rooms are ensuite and you share a kitchen with 8-16 people. However, you could get a shared set, where you share a bathroom and a mini-kitchen with 1 person. Rooms in band 1 do not have ensuite, only a basin. Undergrads are eligible for on-site accommodation for the first 3 years of their course, after which you have to find your own place. All college accom is on 1 site, the college main site.

The rent at Wolfson is cheaper than the central colleges given the size of rooms. Laundry will set you back £4.20 for wash + dry.

FOOD

Typical college cafeteria main + side + dessert easily reaches £5-6. There is NO Kitchen Fixed Charge.

COLLEGES NOT COVERED:

Jesus
Selwyn
St. John's
Sidney Sussex
Trinity Hall

LOCATION

Southwest extreme, 10 min cycle to city centre and 5 min cycle to Sidgwick Site (Humanities).

SIZE

60 UGs & 400 PGs/year (200 UGs total).
20 Singaporeans per year

RENT

£130 - £211 per week

PROS

Incredibly social, welcoming environment, most people are not shy to mingle with new people regularly.
Good facilities, good kitchens, gym.

CONS

Expensive laundry and food. Only 8 washers + dryers for the whole college. Distant location.

OTHER

No separate JCR and MCR (or even a high table in our dining hall) because the college doesn't believe in hierarchy. There is one common student body, the Wolfson College Student Association (WCSA), which represents all students in the college. The cafeteria converts into a student-run bar from 20:00 to 00:00, and you can work behind the bar and earn £9.50 per hour.
There is a massage chair, Xbox, 2 pool tables, 1 billiards table, 1 table football, lots of board games, and 6 pianos which are either freely available or bookable based on your music grade.
Lots of buildings named after Lee Seng Tee, who was a major benefactor, and therefore a lot of buildings with Asian elements in their architecture. Sometimes feels like Chinese Garden for real.

courses: an intro

computer science

STRUCTURE

A: Compulsory courses, can only choose between questions but not courses. Need to do NST Math, can choose between A or B (B is faster, more topics, get more choices in exam).
IB: a lot of courses in the timetable, but can choose which ones to do in exam + a project. II: can choose your courses.

LOCATION

First year: New museums site, location for NST math lecture differs. Second year onwards: Computer Lab

SIZE

115
4-10 Singaporeans

1ST YEAR SUBJECTS

https://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/teaching/2223/part1a.html
https://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/teaching/exams/exam-structure.pdf

CONTACT HOURS

11h of lecture a week + 0-6h of practical a week + average of 3h of supervision (can vary vastly through the weeks) and however much time taken to complete the supervision work

UNIQUE TRAITS

Breadth (due to compulsory courses) and theoretical depth.

PROS

It covers quite a lot of stuff and definitely makes you think quite a bit.

CONS

Some courses are really hard and some lecturers like to set really hard questions about stuff that they never really talk about in lectures. Sometimes they have not enough supervisors and you have supervisions clustered a week before exams ;) Not much hands on, but with the amount of material covered that may be infeasible anyway.

CAREERS

GovTech, DSTA, else: any tech or even quant role in companies (tech or bank or whatever) — there's a lot of career opportunities!

economics

STRUCTURE

Part 1: 5 compulsory papers
Part 2A: 3 compulsory + 1 optional
Part 2B: 2 compulsory + 2 optional + dissertation

LOCATION

Sidgwick

SIZE

`155
10 Singaporeans

1ST YEAR SUBJECTS

Micro, Macro, Math, Politics, British economic history

CONTACT HOURS

Around 2-3h a week of supos and 10-12 hours of lectures

UNIQUE TRAITS

Politics and British Economic History, very essay-based topics. Very mathematically rigorous.

PROS

Rigorous. All 5 papers start off extremely different, but as the year goes on the more you know, the more you can apply concepts across papers!

CONS

The workload can be quite intense, although this really varies depending on how much of the optional readings you want to do. Singaporeans often struggle with essays at first, but they enrich your understanding of the course.

engineering

STRUCTURE

IA and IB: General engineering, covering mechanics, thermofluids, structures, materials, electrical, information, math and management. Throughout the year there are also coursework/labs to undertake.
IIA: Specialise into engineering area of choice based on choice of 10 modules (Aero, Mech; Bio; Civil, Energy, Sustainability and the Environment; Electrical and Electronic; Electrical and Info sci; Info and Computer; Instrumentation and Control), or keep a broad focus. Modules are examined by end-of-year tripos exam. There is also associated coursework throughout the year. Can also go into MET (Manufacturing, separate course). Alternative opt for an exchange year to Singapore or Paris.
IIB: Continue with specialisation/general engineering through 8 modules, examined through a combination of coursework and examination. There is also a final-year project which takes up around 50% of your time.

LOCATION

Mostly at the Engineering department Trumpington site for lectures and labs, supervision locations at department or different colleges (usually in own college). Civil/electrical engineering supervisions/research in 3rd and 4th year may be located at the West Cambridge site.

SIZE

350
7 Singaporeans

CONTACT HOURS

1,200 hours of study each year, 36-45 hours per week (officially at least). In the form of lectures, labs, supervisions, revision.

PROS

Sufficiently rigorous and covers a broad scope. Requires you to not only understand the theory but apply it in various ways.

CONS

Time consuming and difficult. Lacks practical applications and skills which you either have to pick up on your own or join a society and do a project.

UNIQUE TRAITS

First 2 years of general engineering followed by specialisation as compared to other universities where engineers specialise in 1st year.

CAREERS

Government scholarships (most of them accept engineering as a valid course of study), Engineering consultancy, software, Finance.

geography

STRUCTURE

Part IA: 2 compulsory papers (human and physical geography) + 1 practical exercise + 1 non-examinable paper
Part IB: Choose 3 papers from 6 available + 1 compulsory paper
Part II: Choose 4 papers from 12 available + dissertation

LOCATION

Downing

SIZE

100
2-3 Singaporeans

1ST YEAR SUBJECTS

Human and Physical Geography (7 subtopics for each branch), Geography's Shapes and Patterns (non-examinable), Geographical Skills and Methods

CONTACT HOURS

1-2h of supervisions and 7-9h of lectures a week

UNIQUE TRAITS

Depth of discussion with your supervisors and the space for students to direct your learning based on specific interests within the course

PROS

The course demands critical assessment of geographical information and data, and challenges most people's assumptions of geography, particularly the lecture series about the history and development of geography as a discipline.

CONS

More contact hours might have improved depth of learning, but that would have increased the study load for exams (which is actually quite heavy if you want to cover a decent amount of content).

CAREERS

Most government scholarships (because Geography is a general degree). Career options are also diverse, given the interdisciplinary nature of Geography.

human social & political science

STRUCTURE

HSPS Part I: comprising the first year of the course, this part allows you to experience the different papers offered: (1) Politics, (2) International Relations, (3) Sociology, and (4) Social Anthropology.
You are given the option to specialise in a particular track, or to choose from several joint tracks. The papers you take are customisable (to an extent), and you can pick and choose the papers that you find most interesting.

LOCATION

Sidgwick

SIZE

180
6 Singaporeans

1ST YEAR SUBJECTS

Core papers: Politics, International Relations, Sociology, Social Anthropology. Additional: Biological anthropology, Psychology. One core paper can be dropped and replaced by an additional one.

CONTACT HOURS

Lectures: 8 hours per week. Supervisions: about 1 to 1.5 hours per supervision, up to 4 per week

UNIQUE TRAITS

The flexibility offered in paper and track choices allows you to customise your degree (within constraints) to best suit your interests.

PROS

The course encourages you to read widely, think deeply, and assess critically. These skills apply not only to the course, but have wider social purchase as well. With the right supervisors, the supervision setting can work quite well, given that the nature of the papers are deliberative in nature, which gives you unique, diverse perspectives on a range of topics. The degree of customisability offered is unique, and gives you the ability to change your degree to suit your interests or desires. You can focus on particular tracks or topics, such as sociology, or branch out into other areas, such as theology or history. Certain things taught in the course have significant real-world applicability; it is a course that not only offers you a degree and academic credentials, but changes the way you think, interact, and perceive the world around you.

CONS

The workload can be very intensive; as you are expected to read widely, you will have to read A LOT. There are 12 supervision essays a term, each of which requires you to read at least 2 - 3 core readings of varying length. Along with the intensity of supervisions and prep work, the exams can be quite challenging (especially in 1st year), given that you are effectively being assessed on 4 different subjects. To a lesser extent, given the deliberative, opinionated nature of the course, certain viewpoints or arguments may be received less favourably.

CAREERS

Most humanities-related scholarships are applicable, such as ministries (Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and PSC). Scholars also come from other companies like CAG, SIA, & NLB.
Careers can be diverse, given that the skills and subject matter taught are widely applicable; academia, social work, policymaking and international relations, foreign diplomacy, politics, management, teaching, and NGOs.

law

STRUCTURE

Part IA: 4 compulsory papers
Part IB: 2 compulsory papers + 3 optional papers
Part II: 2 compulsory papers +3 optional papers

LOCATION

Sidgwick

SIZE

220-230
10-15 Singaporeans

1ST YEAR SUBJECTS

Criminal, Roman, Constitutional and Torts

CONTACT HOURS

2 hours per week for supervisions
10-12 hours of lectures per week

UNIQUE TRAITS

Roman Law! It may sound really archaic but is super conceptually fun and interesting to learn. Offers very useful insights into the development of the parallel civilian system.

PROS

The ability to go really in depth for individual papers! As opposed to other universities, the law course at Cambridge offers the ability to go much deeper in depth for issues like inchoate offences and secondary participation etc, issues that may be covered more fleetingly or in lesser depth by other unis. The depth is really fascinating intellectually and definitely compensates for the relative lack of flexibility to take individual specialised topics, by having a holistic conceptual framework by which to view the big picture issues.

CONS

The relative lack of flexibility to choose sections and aspects of different areas of law. i.e. if you take company law, you will have to examine the whole of company life from company formation to insolvency. You cannot just take an individual module on insolvency.

medicine

STRUCTURE

2 years of preclinical medicine, followed by 1 year of a tripos subject of your choice (e.g. law, engineering, biological sciences), and then 3 years of clinical medicine

LOCATION

Downing Site

SIZE

300/year
2-4 Singaporeans

1ST YEAR SUBJECTS

Anatomy, Biochemistry, Physiology

CONTACT HOURS

11-12 hours of lectures, 6-10 hours of practicals, 3 hours of supervisions

UNIQUE TRAITS

Very distinct clinical-preclinical separation, first 3 years are basically a science degree - a lot of emphasis on research & experimentation. Also, most medical degrees get examined by MCQs and short answers but Oxbridge medical courses have essay writing which is 50% of your grade that really requires you to understand the material, structure it into your own words and do wider reading.

PROS

The science aspect of medicine makes doing research during internships a lot easier. It also gives a better understanding than mere rote learning.

CONS

As with many subjects at university, the teaching and amount of learning material varies depending on lecturer - some subjects aren't covered in depth, while some may be overloaded with info.

CAREERS

Doctor or Clinician-Scientist, MOHH Pre-Employment Grant (PEG): apply in Year 4

OTHER

Note there is a government quota of 7.5% for international medics, which works out to about 21 for Cambridge, and since 2021/22 this has included EU students.

modern & medieval languages

STRUCTURE

ab initio: year 1 – intensive language learning (four skills) and culture/literature, year 2 – take same papers as 1st-year post-A level students

post A-level: year 1 – grammar (use of), translation, speaking, and culture/literature, year 2 – audiovisual translation, culture/literature, option to learn related language; year 3 abroad; year 4 coursework

LOCATION

Sidgwick

SIZE

160/year

CONTACT HOURS

ab initios have 4h of language classes per week; post A-levels have 1h of grammar class per week + 1h of translation class per fortnight; each language has ~2h of culture/lit lectures and 1h of lit supervision + 1h of oral supervision per week

UNIQUE TRAITS

Being able to experience different humanities tracks allows you to acquire a feel for each individual subject before deciding to specialise in a particular one, and this option is (apparently) unique to Cambridge. Not only do you experience different tracks, but you gain a holistic understanding about how each track offers its own unique perspectives and benefits to the humanities as a whole.

PROS

Lots of opportunities to travel and practise your language skills while immersing in the culture of the country; you can get funding to travel and do summer courses/intern/work in these countries not only during your Year Abroad; can interact quite often with people from different colleges, especially if you do one language ab initio.

CONS

The MML department can be quite inefficient and disorganized, ab initio teaching (at least for German) is not very structured and requires a lot of self-directed learning to process the new grammar and vocab thrown at you every day (on average 2 chapters of the textbook covered every week, which can be quite intense)

natural sciences (bio)

STRUCTURE

Choice of 3 experimental and 1 mathematical subjects in part IA, 3 subjects in part IB, focus on 1 subject in part II, and option to continue to part III to graduate with an MSci instead of a BA degree.

LOCATION

Downing Site

SIZE

500-600 across both phys & bio Natural Sciences

1ST YEAR SUBJECTS

Biology of Cells, Evolution & Behaviour, Physiology of Organisms, Mathematical Biology

CONTACT HOURS

For each IA subject (per week): 3h of lectures, 1h of supervision, ~6h of preparation for supervision, ~3h of lab

UNIQUE TRAITS

Biological subjects (besides practicals and Mathematical Biology) are mostly assessed via essays (1000 words) and short answer questions (100-150 words) with no MCQs. Need to be able to organise and structure answers in addition to understanding content. Quite a lot of emphasis is also placed on experimental evidence and being able to design experiments (techniques in broad strokes, no need to know specific reagents/apparatus in detail) to investigate hypotheses. Also the opportunity to be interdisciplinary depending on subject choice.

PROS

Besides being able to dabble in multiple scientific fields according to your interests, the smaller teacher:student ratio in supervisions (usually 1:2) means you have more chances to ask questions and receive more attention, and can also have more fruitful and deeper discussions about the content. The essay system encourages getting a better understanding of common themes and ideas for each topic, instead of being bogged down by specific details and obscure facts in an MCQ system, for example.

CONS

First year has the most number of contact hours (since you have to do 4 subjects) which can feel quite overwhelming - do not worry though, you will have more free time in 2nd and 3rd year. As the course is conducted across several departments (eg Biochemistry, Genetics, Zoology, Plant Sciences etc), some lecturers may not necessarily talk to each other to coordinate, and so might end up having overlap or (rarely) contradictions. Fortunately, you can clarify matters during supervisions, so use the chance well!

natural sciences (phys)

STRUCTURE

Choice of 3 experimental and 1 mathematical subjects in part IA, 3 subjects in part IB, focus on 1 subject in part II, and option to continue to part III to graduate with an MSci instead of a BA degree.

LOCATION

Downing Site, Chemistry Department

SIZE

500-600 across both phys & bio Natural Sciences
15-20 Singaporeans

1ST YEAR SUBJECTS

Chemistry, Earth Sciences, Materials Science, Physics, Mathematics. Mathematics is split into course A and course B; B is harder/contains more content but is NOT a prerequisite for any upper year subjects. Both course A and course B have the same exam.

CONTACT HOURS

For each IA subject: 3h of lectures, 1h of supervision, ~6h of preparation for supervision, ~3h of lab

UNIQUE TRAITS

The ability to begin your degree with a broad foundation is an unique aspect of Cambridge's Natural Science Tripos, and a key reason why some choose Cambridge over Oxford (which takes the conventional approach of specialising in a single subject from the get go). This is valuable for the simple fact that modern research is increasingly multi-disciplinary, and having knowledge over a wide spectrum of fields will not only impart you with a distinctive scientific perspective, but also make you a valuable addition to any research team.

PROS

If you have interests in many fields in science, the NST course allows you to continue exploring them even at a university level. Ideas learnt from one subject can inspire and complement another. However, the gradual transition to specialisation nonetheless provides subject-specific expertise just as well as or better than other universities.

CONS

Certain topics in science such as thermodynamics and resonance lie in the intersection of all physical sciences, so you will end up learning about the same topic 2 or 3 times, albeit from different perspectives. The high workload and extensive contact hours can make work-life balance tricky if you haven't developed good time management. And as one of the largest courses in Cambridge, one sometimes cannot help but feel small and estranged.

CAREERS

A*STAR, MOE-AU, DSTA, Loke Cheng-Kim, or any other government/industry scholarship. Common careers include research, teaching, finance, analytics, programming.

into the specifics

sample personal statements

computer science

Poems are graceful, succinct, yet powerful. To me, a piece of code is just like a poem. In Primary School when I first built a personality test game using QuickBASIC, I was fascinated by the gratification of writing an elegant code, and its powerfulness in transforming ideas into reality. Later, at a talk by a Facebook developer, I could not agree with him more as he shared his excitement of using mere lines of code to influence millions of lives. To me, Computer Science is not only the key to a more automated human future, but also a wand that empowers us to be masters of a digital universe.

My interest in technology has led me to participate in research projects. In the field of Human-Computer Interfaces, I researched on wearable neural sensing under <redacted> from A*STaR Institute of Infocomm Research. I programmed a game in Python to test users' cognitive concentration with the aid of an electroencephalography device. In the area of machine learning, I completed two projects under <redacted>. One project applies
classification algorithms to predict students' A-Level grades and analyse the algorithms' relative performances. The other project proposes new meta-features by clustering datasets in high dimensions for meta-learning.

Besides gaining domain knowledge in HCI, psychology and machine learning, I also honed my programming, research and investigative skills. My work was recognised at Singapore Science and Engineering Fair twice, and won <redacted>. My team also submitted our paper on meta-learning to several conferences, such as <redacted>, and gained eye-opening insights from professional researchers.

My research experience has also showed me the rigour expected from computer scientists. I constantly find opportunities to improve my foundational understanding. I offered H3 Mathematics in my second year of A level study, which exposed me to proof-based mathematics to solve problems in single-variable calculus, number theory, and combinatorics. I also participated in the Australian Mathematics Competition and Singapore Mathematics Olympiad. As a result, I have consistently atained the top percentile in my cohort on both H2 Computing and Mathematics in major examinations.

But my most instructive experience was competitive programming. It has shown me that code can be beautiful, almost poeCc. Well-chosen abstraction barriers lend structure and clarity to the programmer's intents; elegant algorithms dissect and reveal the subject matter's true nature, such as when a series of unspoken but ingenious mathematical arguments exposes the recursive sub- structure that yields easily to dynamic programming techniques. I find many such delights when I view other programmer's code on their blogs or on online judging platforms. Sometimes I write something on my own that surprises myself. I keep a journal full of these little programs that I like. My consistent practice and solid mathematical background have helped me achieve a **** at Singapore National Olympiad in Informatics.

I strive to share my love for programming with others. As our school's IT club leader, I designed courses on web development to teach our members JavaScript, CSS and HTML. We built the foundations of a classroom booking website for our school. I am also a Co-Chairperson of a naCon- wide conference ****. Through these leadership experiences I have learnt to analyse complex situations, manage my time, cope with stress, and ensure every committee member can maximise their strengths and coordinate harmoniously. I am also a weekly tutor at ****, in which I teach children from under-privileged backgrounds programming.

As cliche as it sounds, I do believe computer science is the future, and I am eager to be part of it.

~ Anonymous

computer science

I have always been fascinated with solving problems and understanding how systems work. As such, I want to study Computer Science in University.

Mathematics and Physics have always been my strong suits. In school, I often applied my analytical tendencies to study beyond the syllabus and understand the theoretical concepts underpinning the content we learnt. My interest in computer science was sparked when I was offered the opportunity to study it as an elective in Sec 2. During the class, we were often encouraged to read the documentation rather than being told the answer, and learnt how to think creatively in order to debug our code ourselves. Being largely project-based, I thoroughly enjoyed the ability to learn independently. The ability to control the computer to do so much through ingenious ways of representing and manipulating data was a deeply enthralling experience that motivated me to pursue the subject further.

In spite of my school not offering Computing as a subject in Junior College, I was able to further my interest in the subject during a research project where I built a self-driving robotic car powered by a Raspberry Pi. This was one of my favourite projects as it involved sourcing for hardware from local hardware shops as well as programming the software. Being able to get these separate technologies to work together was a highly challenging and often frustrating process, due to sparse and convoluted documentation. However, I deeply enjoyed experimenting with different hardware and software systems, and seeing everything come together to form the finished product gave me a sense of accomplishment that made me even more interested in pursuing Computer Science.

The desire to arrive at a deeper understanding of how a computer works motivated me to engage in self-directed study in various topics such as Data Structures, Machine Learning and Computer Organisation after A-Levels. These courses made me realise that apart from hard theoretical results, computer science also dealt with many design choices, such as balancing runtime and memory. I also came to discover different ways of thinking about programs - such as Object-Oriented Programming which views computation in terms of classes of data and the interfaces through which they interact with other objects, as well as Data Science which is interested in discovering patterns in data. New paradigms, such as the prospect of Quantum computing, might also emerge, forcing me to constantly learn new technologies and ways of thinking, something which I deeply enjoy.

My favourite personal project was creating an 8-bit computer using only processor, RAM chips and electronic components. This project allowed me to appreciate how computer systems are built by layers of abstraction - from semiconductors, to Instruction Set Architectures, to Programming Languages and finally applications - often extending on the work of others. I experienced this first-hand during a Machine Learning hackathon I had participated in with my friends where I had to communicate the ideas in my code clearly to my teammates allowing us to work effectively together.

In my free time, I enjoy outdoor activities, such as hiking and cycling, and sports such as rock climbing and table tennis, as fun ways to live a healthy and balanced lifestyle. I also enjoy reading - especially literary texts - as they invite me to ponder issues surrounding the human condition through evocative imagery, deepening my sense of empathy and compassion.

I believe that computer science is as much of an art as it is a science, due to the importance of creative thinking and elegant design in the field. As such, a university education in the subject is important for me to learn from the masters in the craft. I hope to be given the opportunity to experience the academic rigour and intensity in a UK university that would equip me with the necessary skills in order to create technologies that are impactful and beneficial to society in the future.

~ Anonymous

economics

Economic theory amazes me as a logical framework to view the world. H3 Game Theory proved to me how economics can be applied to practically every aspect of life. This ranges from using rollback and calculus to analyse interactions between firms, to viewing nuclearisation as a dominant strategy despite the world collectively being better off without such weapons, illustrating a prisoners' dilemma. This has also allowed me to question the rationality of real-life interactions. Why do states adopt a tit-for-tat strategy in trade wars despite not being a subgame perfect equilibrium? Why do firms still collude in games with finite rounds when the rational move is to defect every round? I achieved a distinction in this subject, but a greater takeaway would be the deepening my analytical skills which changed the way I see the world.

Determined to further understand how economics could be applied to life, I picked up Freakonomics, which cited a Chicago drug club that paid dealers very low wages, but many were still willing to do the job in hope of ascending to the top. Curious as to why they would do so given the extremely low probability of achieving this, I delved further into behavioural economics and realised from prospect theory that this low probability was overweighted, making the prospect of being handsomely rewarded with low probability more appealing than prospects for other jobs, illustrating the possibility effect. This made me appreciate how economics can help better understand human psychology and behaviour.

Moreover, my eagerness to better understand Singapore's economy compelled me to participate in the National Economics & Financial Management Challenge, which I achieved third runner-up in. I argued that encouraging SMEs to innovate and scale up required more government funding to complement venture capital from the private sector. I drew on the concept of animal spirits in The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money by Keynes to conclude that this would ensure a more steady source of funding for SMEs by reducing the influence of the private sector's business confidence, which fluctuates easily, on SMEs decision to invest.

During the competition, I was also required to quantitatively approach economics. I thoroughly enjoyed applying geometric progression to calculate the present value of future profits, and applying differentiation to find the profit-maximising output, to name a few examples. I believe my strong foundation in mathematics, evidenced by achieving an A at H2 level, coupled with my enthusiasm to deepen my understanding of economics through mathematics, put me in a strong position to apply quantitative models in economics.

I also love how economics promotes originality of thought, allowing for discussion of multiple viewpoints. Having read Friedman's Capitalism and Freedom, in which he argued that economic freedom is a necessary freedom, I disagree with this notion. I believe that government intervention in personal finances can raise the overall welfare of society. For example, Singapore's CPF policy mandates savings for retirement, ensuring citizens smoothen consumption over their lifetime as in Life-Cycle Theory, eliminating the need for pension schemes. These funds can be diverted to areas like healthcare, enhancing societal welfare.

Beyond academics, I served in the Interact Club in school, during which I was awakened to how meaning in life extends beyond personal benefit, and experienced the joy of creating value in the lives of others. This desire to lead a meaningful, contributive life coupled with my deep passion in economics fueled my desire to serve as a public sector economist. I hope to secure a place at a world-renowned institute where I can develop a rigorous understanding in the field of economic study, so as to achieve my goal of contributing to policymaking which optimises Singapore's development based on sound economic analysis.

~ Anonymous

Overall Pointers:

- Maybe don't use Freakanomics cause it's very mainstream (or if you do give a very interesting insight no one else will give)
- The goal here is to show and not tell that you like the subject.
- Do not list what books you read but rather what insights you take away and your personal perspective.
- Make sure you actually read whatever books you include in the statement as they could quiz you on it.

engineering

From young, I have had a seedling of intuition that gravitated me towards appreciating physics and mathematics. Today it has developed into an incurable obsession with astronomy and discovering the wonders of space-black holes in specific- and intrigued me to unearth more information about our universe, and how things work. I want to get down to the minute details, loving to seek answers to the "why", and the "how". The same obsession fuelled my passion for the two subjects. It began when my parents got me a book about the solar system. As a child, I just could not fathom that there were countless other gigantic planets and stars just waiting to be discovered. Being able to do my own research now. I realise that we still lack so much information about our universe. I want to be someone who contributes to this field. The applications of natural sciences in our daily life seem almost magical. Engineering defines the art of human creativity, physics governs our fundamental laws and mathematics is the language through which these wonders unfold, be it the it historical moon-landing, the M87 blackhole photograph or even NASA's Ingenuity achieving flight on Mars.

I have had opportunities to gain more exposure in these disciplines. I attended the 11th International Science Youth Forum and witnessed Nobel Laureates like LIGO's Barry Barish discuss their attitude towards scientific inquiry, which taught me a simple yet profound idea: relentlessness and dedication are essential to any truth-seeker. also participated in several international competitions, like Shanghai T1 2018. AMC 2018 & 2019 and Euclid 2019. Avenues to hone my problem-solving skills, they gave me a glimpse of the rigour of higher-level mathematics, which was startling yet fascinating at the same time. It instilled in me a deeper appreciation for the abstract power of maths and logic. A powerful discovery was that the 'AND', 'OR', and 'NOT' functions alone can represent any logical statement, which has profound implications in Boolean algebra, and programming languages.

This further piqued my interest in the very systematic world of computers, pondered how this web of fundamentals was eventually weaved into the application of Al and ML in the Perseverance rover to conduct geomapping of Mars' surface.

H3 Physics brought me deeper insights into the fundamentals of mechanics, electricity, and magnetism. Through Gauss' and Ampere's Law. I learnt just how pivotal integration is in derivations and solving problems, and was able to prove, using 2nd order DEs, why RLC circuits are damped oscillations. Studying orbital transfers taught me the importance of optimisation and efficiency in projects, especially with time and money involved, On the non-academic front, several books have also aroused my interest in science research. "Brief Answers to the Big Questions" shed light on current projects like Breakthrough Starshot and the practicality of time travel by considering the paradoxical effects of causality. This, alongside Kaku's "Future of Humanity", was an eye-opener to humanity's perennial question: how do we leave Earth once our resources are exhausted? I was introduced to our plans to land humans on Mars in the next decade, and was invited to critically analyse our options for a new habitat and resources. This is a question I hope to help find an answer to.

Behind us rests the legacy of the Wright brothers, and I know that ahead, at the apex of engineering blended with ever-advancing computing technology, lies the next revolutionary wave of space exploration. I certainly wish to join this wave of scientists and engineers who are currently pioneering our future. Pursuing this course is what will offer me the wealth of knowledge, industry exposure, and opportunities-from design, to robotics to Al - to join these pioneers in harnessing the power of new technology to shape and secure our shared future.

~ Sushant Patil

geography

At seventeen, I had the privilege of visiting the Maldives on a family holiday, exploring lush islands bordered by azure beaches by day and traversing eclectic street markets in Male by night. The Maldives held an enchanting appeal beyond mere visual beauty: I marvelled at sandbars connecting islands, pondered the implications of the nation's dispersed territory on its population and economy, and gaped at the hypnotic ebb and flow of crystal waves. Here was an unsuspecting place to see Geography in both its human and physical dimensions unfold, yet the connections were clear. For the first time, I could scrutinise coastal landforms previously accessible only through the textbook, could witness academic theories on tourism play out in real time. It is precisely this diversity and ubiquity of Geography that appeals to my insatiable thirst for knowledge; no other discipline is so vast as to encompass seemingly disparate topics such as physical landscapes and humanistic systems.

My love for geography has led me to a deeper understanding of the world around me. While reading Edward Said's "Orientalism", I was intrigued by Said's thesis on the power relations between the East and the West, finding it a fruitful examination of the geopolitical and cultural ties across continents. In particular, I realised that the creation of the "Orient", much like the cultural impositions wrought by colonialism, actively reproduces a skewed relationship that positions the "Occident" as the superior party, thereby creating a unique geography of power that has permeated through both Eastern and Western cultures today. Accordingly, the prospect of studying cultural geographies and geopolitics in university excites me as an organic extension of the ideas explored in "Orientalism". In 2019, I secured an internship at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and found myself applying many geographical concepts when I considered how Rwanda's landlocked status influenced its socio-economic policies. I learnt that its goal to become "Africa's Singapore" is motivated by the exigencies of being a geographically minute country in a continent battling political and economic instability, reinforcing my appreciation for geography as an all-encompassing framework for understanding development, as it synthesises economic, physical and political perspectives to distill unique insights.

Embarking on a H3 Literature paper, I honed my academic rigour while examining literary presentations of queer identity. Notably present in academic articles on my chosen texts were analyses on the concept of the "Heterotopia" and the influence of space in shaping identity - a concept integral to Geography, proving again the relevance of the discipline. This year, I worked with fellow alumni to lead "GeogCafe", a school-based teaching initiative where we conducted lessons on essential skills and strategies for the Geography A Level examination; the experience consolidated my understanding of Geography on a metacognitive level, spurring me to desire further engagement with the discipline in university. I am a recipient of the MOE Humanities Scholarship in recognition of my academic aptitude, and placed on the Dean's List in 2018 and 2019. I was also the vice-president of my school's Drama Club and a co-founder of the Current Affairs Society. I believe my inclination for interdisciplinary and collaborative learning will allow me to navigate the depth and breadth of Geography in university with ease.

The adage that "Without Geography, we are nowhere" may strike many as a cliche, but it is a timely reminder of the importance of Geography in bettering lives. In an era of constant flux and seismic changes to the world order, Geography is the bedrock offering an incomparably diverse education that will empower me to think critically, feel sensitively and reflect profoundly.

~ Anonymous

I come from a culture of intersections. Living in Singapore means that my identity is derived from the bridges between diverse racial narratives, which has created unique norms that define our nationhood. Be it our use of colloquial Singlish or the multiracial parliament that leads my country, these characteristics of my country aroused my interest in understanding the making of societies. To me, every dimension of the Humanities brings valuable depth to this inquiry.

Thus, pursuing Knowledge-and-Inquiry (KI), Literature, and Art for my A-Levels gave me the window to learn more about societies' intricacies. Fundamentally, my studies taught me to embrace the eminence of subjectivity, the human perspectives that inform us of who we are. Learning about the social sciences in KI taught me the power of narratives in knowledge to either emancipate or oppress. To Foucault, knowledge builds power structures that subdue the voiceless, masquerading as veneers of objectivity. Yet, we must have faith in the revisionary powers of persistent inquiry, the most potent form of resistance to oppression, embracing the creative and intentional nature of human beings.

Similarly, grasping narratives unlocked new worlds of meaning for me in Literature and Art History. I was fascinated by the Nanyang Artists and their endeavour to craft a uniquely Singapore artistic heritage and thus decided to pursue H3 Art. It taught me about Art's role in defining our cultural identities and how power is inextricably tied to the powers of representation. Just as colonial powers are invisibly preserved through Saleh's idyllic landscapes that romanticised colonised Singapore, so can tyrannical powers be exposed through Minjun's satiric paintings that lash out at China's revolutionary history.

Outside of the classroom, my enthusiasm to gather new perspectives lead me to Political Studies and Sociology. My 2016 essay on the geopolitical implications of the Duterte Administration in the Philippines helped me secure the national Humanities Scholarship. Venturing out of my comfort zone, I participated in the 2017 Singapore Model Cabinet as a delegate and won the Outstanding Delegate Award. Underlying these achievements is my curiosity to learn more about the political dimensions of our society. To me, Peter Mair's Ruling The Void provides chilling insight into the depoliticisation of societies and the obsolete future of party democracy. Yet, the formulation of political parties as ideal vanguards of democracy against demagogues in Levitsky's How Democracies Die is an avenue for hope.

Reading This is What Inequality Looks Like by Teo You Yenn also gave new meaning to my longstanding social work in public childcare centres for disadvantaged families. The experiential core of her analysis of social inequality in Singapore made me realise that discussions about poverty and privilege are not merely games of numbers and trends - they are built upon the bedrock of narratives embedded within our national story of meritocracy. The stories I hear from the children I tutor become a learning process for me, facets of the structural inequality that eludes us in our national pursuit of progress.

As a student director, I learnt invaluable lessons through choosing to direct a play based on Kuo Pao Kun's The Coffin is Too Big for The Hole, a satiric comedy that subversively critiques the over-bureaucratisation of our nation. By emphasising the tension between the self and the state, the play deconstructs our local social fabric of values. It is a testament to how our lived experiences must be a crucial factor in our cities' governance, a reflection of the zeitgeist of 1980's Singapore.

Unpacked narratives add life to statistics, and lived experiences transform our social theories. I have found much joy in broadening my inquiry so far, and I am eager to explore the vast fields of knowledge and possibilities that your school offers.

~ Anonymous

law

As a Literature student, I have always been intrigued by the concept of injustice within laws explored by fiction books like J M Coetzee's "Waiting for the Barbarians". In the book, the authorities' degeneration of the law to detain and torture nomads showed me how powerful and double edged the law can be, in either creating the conditions for due process and transparency or the legitimisation of cruel and oppressive regimes that strip away individual rights and dignity.

Reading "Justice" by Michael Sandel helped me to understand competing philosophical conceptions of justice and how the law is a balance between these different visions of justice. Further exploration led me to "The Rule of Law" by Lord Bingham which exposed me to the idea of equality before the law, the law as a vital safeguard against arbitrariness and despotism. The book's discussion on the exercise of power felt especially relevant in light of recent rulings in Miller II and Trump v Vance, underlining the importance of judicial review to curtail the expansive powers claimed by the executive branch. Reading "What About Law?" has allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the seven core areas of English Law. In particular, the chapter on Land Law was especially fascinating, revealing how rigidities of English common law can be countered through legal equity, giving parties who otherwise have no rights at common law an equitable share of the property, preventing miscarriages of justice. Reading about different areas of law made me realise that the study of law is not definitive but dynamic and multifaceted.

Reading "The Drone Memos" by Jameel Jaffer and watching documentaries like "Official Secrets" and "National Bird" has fuelled my interest in public law regulating the relationship between the citizen and government. In "The Drone Memos", the Obama administration's use of the full arsenal of executive powers to prevent after-the-fact judicial review of the killing of US citizens in drone strikes showed me the importance of having clear, accessible laws to safeguard individual rights against executive encroachment even in trying and uncertain times. "Official Secrets" was also especially insightful in showing me the subtle way English parliamentary sovereignty can be used to undermine democracy, with Thatcher's amendment of the 1911 Official Secrets Act after the acquittal of Clive Ponting to preclude a public interest defence in cases of whistleblowing to expose government misconduct. The David versus Goliath nature of such proceedings, in the context of a lone citizen against the unbridled powers of the executive, makes it an important area of law that I wish to explore further.

Debating for my school has allowed me to think deeper into the different controversies and conflicts within society, questions that the law has to address. For instance, should prisons be privatised? Will the granting of discretionary powers such as disciplinary punishment of prisoners by private employees be compatible with the state's monopoly on invasive powers? Work experience with the National University of Singapore Pro Bono Clinic and Lee & Lee has further solidified my interest in law, giving me a taste of what it is like to practise in harassment and arbitration.

Being the recipient of the <redacted>, the importance of giving back to the community has not been lost on me, motivating me to lead a team to tutor academically struggling children from low income households weekly when I was in school. Instilling in my tutees a sense of work ethic and seeing an improvement in their grades has been one of the proudest moments in my life. Studying Law at Cambridge has been a lifelong aspiration and I hope the skills gained from my experiences would situate me well to gain entry to this esteemed institution.

SAQ Statement:
I am particularly interested in the Roman Law course uniquely offered by the University. As a History student, it would be insightful to examine how the Romans first formulated a formal body of law to found the first empire. Studying Roman Law would also set a context to examine how the law subsequently developed in continental Europe under civil law jurisdictions, using a more principle doctrine based approach to deciding cases rather than the common law approach of precedent.

Most interestingly, the study of Roman law would also deepen my understanding of how English law developed, most noticeably under Lord Mansfield that introduced various principles of Roman law into English jurisprudence, drawing out principles of the law from isolated cases and infusing Equity into the more rigid common law counterpart. The significance of Roman law as the foundation of modern law makes it an especially relevant and fascinating subject, and one I hope to study in greater depth at university.

~ Anonymous

natural sciences

I am intensely curious about the natural world and am driven by an ardent passion to obtain knowledge to satiate this curiosity. I feel that my calling is to add to the collective knowledge of humanity through biological research and for this reason I wish to take up a course of rigorous study in the natural sciences, especially Biology.

In 2016 and 2017, I participated in the Singapore Junior Biology Olympiad – achieving the Gold Award for both years and emerging overall champion in the latter year. Naturally, I then took part in the Singapore Biology Olympiad 2018, achieving the Silver Award. Additionally, I was part of the top 8 shortlisted as the National Training Team for the International Biology Olympiad 2019 – where I underwent intensive biweekly training with various professors over four months. However, what comes to mind when I recall these experiences now aren't the medals but instead the countless hours I spent with like-minded peers, teachers, and professors discussing concepts, learning from one another and sharing a common enthusiasm for the biological sciences. I feel that this Olympiad journey helped ignite my passion for the sciences and reinforced the skill of collaborative learning, which will surely serve useful in my course of study.

Since childhood, I was interested in pathogens and subsequently, my interests evolved to include antimicrobial resistance – which remains my intended area of interest in research. The 2014 Review on Antimicrobial Resistance found antimicrobial resistance to likely cause more deaths than cancer by 2050, which motivated me further. Thus, from November to December 2017, I spent 5 weeks at the Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology, A*Star, attached to Dr Ding Xin in a lab focusing on the development of novel antimicrobial techniques. I collected data on synergistic effects between commercial antibiotics and a macromolecular polymer being developed by A*Star which was eventually used in the paper "A macromolecular approach to eradicate multidrug-resistant bacterial infections while mitigating drug resistance onset", published in Nature Communications. Those 5 weeks I spent conducting assays, engaged in the research area I'm most passionate about, were some of the best in my life. More than the personal satisfaction I got from being immersed in my area of interest and the lab techniques I picked up, I feel that what I gained most from this attachment was self-awareness into my suitability for research. I found myself comfortable and satisfied with the repetitive nature of lab work – it was then that I first seriously considered a purely research-based career and by the end of the 5 weeks, I was left knowing I wanted more. I feel that the insight I gained from this attachment into my ability to be meticulous with lab work from the attachment further motivates me in pursuing my course.

Recently, "Bacteriophage trigger antiviral immunity and prevent clearance of bacterial infection", published in Science, was a paper that left a considerable impression on me. When I saw the abstract describing the unprecedented directly pathogenic roles of bacteriophages in bacterial infections, I felt genuine excitement – this was something that had never been seen before. As I read through the paper, I knew that it was breaking new ground and made me even more acutely aware of the sheer intellectual satisfaction newly uncovered knowledge brings me, even just reading about it. The experience reminded me of the vastness of human ignorance and by the end, I was left knowing what I want most in the world is to chip away at this great unknown. I am committed to one day be on the other side of such a paper.

Overall, I have tried to go above and beyond my curriculum in pursuing my passion, which has allowed me to achieve a deeper appreciation of the subject matter. Intellectual curiosity has always been and will continue to be my driving force, pushing me towards a lifetime of research.

~ Anonymous

natural sciences

I want to study Natural Sciences as it will keep me in touch with my favourite subjects - Physics and Chemistry and will allow me to help others by researching and making ground-breaking discoveries. Having experienced the health sector, my goal is to contribute my time, resources and efforts to it. I hope to be part of teams that will leave a mark on society by devising new drugs or drug delivery methods and improving current medical devices.

I have always had an intrinsic thirst for knowledge. In retrospect, I believe it began when I initiated to participate in both Mathematics, and Science Olympiads to expand my knowledge beyond the school curriculum. The Awards and Honourable Mentions for the various Physics, Biology and Chemistry Olympiads were testaments to my passion for the sciences, but deep inside, I revelled more in solving complicated questions and being exposed to new concepts. These greatly improved my critical thinking and problem-solving skills and the excitement of such discovery continues driving me. This unquenchable passion for science was crystallised when I took up H3 Chemistry, which opened new frontiers of Organic Chemistry and Spectroscopy. I often found myself discovering new fascinating science topics online and experimenting with concepts such as Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) Spectroscopy or Aldol Reactions. I looked up the NMR component of the "Spectroscopy" Textbook by Western Washington University and uncovered the fascinating inner workings of Magnetic Resonance Imaging, which are a result of the different densities of signals, depending on how much water molecules in our tissues are in an ordered state. This has inspired me to deepen my understanding of the mechanisms of how different imaging used in hospitals - like X-rays and Prenatal Scans - are produced. Moreover, the most captivating part of the H3 programme was going to Nanyang Technological University and Hwa Chong Institution to learn from experts and equally passionate peers. The stimulating scientific learning community reinforced the need to cooperate to better understand what we did not know yesterday and improve the lives of others tomorrow. The prospect of doing this through real-world applications of Physics and Chemistry gave more meaning to my studies.

To be a scientist, it is vital to know how to work in and lead teams. I acquired these key skills during my time as a Students' Counsellor in Junior College. By planning myriad projects, facilitating events or initiating new endeavours amidst balancing my academics, I learnt self-discipline and time management. The rich experiences and overseas leadership training opportunities in Hong Kong, and the enacted projects for Singapore Boys' Town have made me realise that I am a quiet but assertive leader. These broadened my vision and prepared me for National Service, as I embarked on a career as a Search and Rescue (SAR) Medic Specialist. As a Sergeant, I lead my medic team, oversee the treatment of sick or injured soldiers during SAR operations, and recently started swabbing suspected covid-19 patients. Treating patients on a helicopter is an eye-opening experience and I am grateful to be given this opportunity to care for others. This further motivated me to seek ways to deepen my understanding of health sciences and boosted my interest in the Natural Sciences. For instance, having done countless venipunctures, I took on a Phlebotomy course at Republic Polytechnic to be more proficient and further my understanding of human anatomy. Having gained valuable experiences, I am confident that I want to keep exploring these aspects of research.

My aim is to pursue a career that will allow me to extend my knowledge of healthcare treatments and medical technology. The flexibility of a Natural Sciences degree will help me realise this. I look forward to working with brilliant minds from all around the world and broadening my perspectives.

~ Xu Kuang

natural sciences

I was lying in bed one night when I realised that although I was doing nothing, I was hard at work. Many molecules were coming together like jigsaw pieces to form an image of life, creating complex systems to drive my body to that thought, invisible to me despite occurring on a large scale. More knowledge than one can learn in a life lay buried, which made me feel so big and yet so small at the same time. Science always fascinated me, but this mystique drew me to biochemistry.

To learn about one such system, I studied immunology in the International Biomedical Quiz, winning Merit Prize. Reading immunology textbooks deepened my biology understanding and I was awed at how simple molecules play big roles in immune responses, resulting in an intricate system we do not fully understand. Yet for its complexity it is limited (sometimes threats elude it, or it overreacts and self-destructs) and we have to step in to aid it.

Having won my school's Chemistry subject prize in JC1, I took H3 Pharmaceutical Chemistry to challenge myself to go deeper. I applied what I knew to process advanced texts and discuss research papers, which taught me to always find the full picture to simple textbook models. The most intriguing topic to me was drug interactions, as I could apply biology to why drugs target certain pathways. I also read up on how common drugs like antihistamines work and saw how much occurs without us noticing with simple acts like taking pills.

In my free time, I also read biochem textbooks to deepen my subject understanding. Of great interest to me is the metabolism and biosynthesis of molecules. Here, organic chemistry reactions are applied to understanding how our body processes diverse compounds from fats to drugs. The fact that the body can carry out such reactions efficiently under mild conditions fills me with hope that we can harness such factories for our use and learn from nature to augment ourselves.

I often read science articles for interest, and am excited to see how discoveries, from CRISPR to novel compounds, change the world and add to the jigsaw puzzle of our knowledge, and hope to do the same through research. I have worked towards this goal through research projects since Sec 2, starting with investigations into antibacterial properties of mangrove extracts of species unique to Singapore. Each year was a nonstop process of self-improvement to new ideas like biofilm inhibition by Manuka honey and DNA repair disruption in bacteria by flavonoids and delved into analysis methods like HPLC and Comet Assay. Such novel projects let me apply what I learnt in class to learn beyond it, while adding my piece to the jigsaw puzzle.

In JC1 I researched biomimetic membranes for water treatment using aquaporins, an interdisciplinary effort combining knowledge from biology and chemistry to solve real-world issues, with nature's and our tools working in synergy. I absorbed new information quickly from research papers and my mentor's notes to learn the skills needed and respond to challenges. Inevitably, initial membrane batches did not meet water purity standards, but I persevered and learnt from each failure, devising new solutions to improve the fabrication method to attain higher standards. I also had to engage a diverse audience to explain my work and defend it respectfully, winning Silver Award at SSEF 2017. I learnt to handle the rigours of science research, have the resilience to rise above adversity, and can appreciate the struggles behind the scientific knowledge we take for granted. I also learnt the importance of humility and admitting ignorance in science, as what we know is the tip of an iceberg, and what matters is our will to know more by asking questions.

In all, I believe that I am suited for biochem as I have the aptitude and attitude. If offered a place, I will put in my best effort to grow intellectually, repay society through research, and add my piece to our jigsaw puzzle.

~ Anonymous

philosophy

As I became more health-conscious, I sometimes wondered if it was justified to indulge in sinful food even if it sabotaged one's future health. This entangled me in a broader, no less tantalising philosophical question: have we ethical responsibilities to our future selves? Straddling two favourite philosophical subfields (ethics and personal identity), and impacting our everyday lives and even debates on food regulation, this seemingly simple issue of diet decisions displays my ability to find philosophical fodder in the most mundane matters, and illustrates why I love philosophy: for it underpins all our lives.

Exploring some literature on this topic, particularly Parfit's suggestion in 'Later Selves and Moral Principles' that we may only be connected to past and future selves to varying degrees, and thus may be distinct moral agents from these other selves, I started questioning Parfit's views by invoking a Spinozist distinction between the rational mind that actively forms intentions, and the 'passions' (the subconscious drives that sway the mind's decisions, forming the psychological elements of 'personality' that change with time). Even if the latter transforms our personality greatly, I feel that our 'selfhood' remains constant over time, as the future-oriented way in which the will forms intentions (projecting its existence for an indefinite time into the future as the subject to which future plans refer) grounds the constancy of a single perspective that links all the different personas that a Self can assume in a single lifetime.

Though this assures me somewhat of the commonsense view that we are not morally distinct from past or future selves, I long to probe such metaethical questions further: for example, since learning of the textbook 'justified true belief' view of knowledge in H2 Knowledge and Inquiry (KI), I've been troubled by what 'belief' means, especially ethical belief: I'd like to explore the potential of a dispositionalist account of ethical belief (where we only genuinely 'believe' an ethical proposition if we act or intend to act accordingly) in offering a noncognitivist account of ethics.

Pre-empting the contention that we often betray deepfelt moral convictions and thus feel remorse (the problem of akrasia), referring back to the will/passion distinction raised earlier, I would like to question if we can still privately 'intend' to act morally, even if we are forced by temptation or outside forces to act immorally: in such cases, if we invoke Anscombe's distinction between the (moral) reasons for our intentions, and the (external) causes compelling us to act against moral intentions, could we claim that actions contradicting our moral beliefs are not reflective of true intentions after all? This issue also interests me as a possible case of Moore's paradox showing the difference between merely stating and truly believing in something, and I am eager to engage deeper with thinkers in the analytic tradition dealing with such problems.

Studying KI also trained me in rigorous logical critique of arguments and exposed me to how epistemology was crucial to all academic study, piquing curiosity about Philosophy of the Sciences: especially about the extent to which concepts used in Science are defined merely by human inquirers and current scientific consensus, instead of being absolute. My KI independent study let me investigate this issue by reviewing the validity of using modern medical classifications to make retrospective diagnoses of long-dead historical figures: I thus asked if current medical science, even if it be the most up-to-date, is really valid beyond current paradigms. My ability for independent scholarship in writing the study, while coping with an exceptional 13 academic units and extracurricular leadership positions, also validates my fitness to confront the most intense academic workload in pursuing my passion for Philosophy.

~ Anonymous

psychological & behavioural science

I would like to study psychology in university. Since I was 16, I was certain that psychology is what I wanted to study. I found myself fascinated with people, in particular with how they thought and how people could think and see the world so differently from each other. I found every opportunity to interact with new people, so as to try to understand how they thought. I would talk to my classmates during breaks, to my teachers in between lessons, and on the once- yearly occasion that my extended family met, I interviewed each of them, taking notes down in a notebook. I even, at my church's overseas retreats, sat at tables with complete strangers so that I had new people to talk to and new insights to glean. The more I asked, the more questions popped into my mind, and the greater I desired to answer them. Why do people become depressive and suicidal? Why do religious people (myself included) cling on to their beliefs? It became clear that I had a deep interest in understanding people, more specifically how they think and why they do so.

In exploring possible course choices, I stumbled upon psychology, the study of human behaviour and mental processes. It seemed the perfect fit for my interest in people. Due to my great desire to understand people, especially ones from different backgrounds, I jumped at every opportunity to interact with others. Thus, I took on many volunteering projects over the last two years, ranging from providing free tuition weekly to children to fortnightly elderly visitations. I spent more than a 100 hours on these various projects so that I had more opportunities to interact with others. I think managing a high volume of interaction with others is highly beneficial to a psychologists' work, as they have to frequently interact with fellow psychologists and experimenters, due to the experimental and interdisciplinary nature of the subject.

Given my passion for people, I am both interested in and accustomed to a high volume of interaction, which I feel makes me suitable for both studying psychology and researching it. Through the long hours spent volunteering, I observed many interesting people. One of my tutees seemed to like being violent. Another shoplifted stationery. Multiple elderly I visited very visibly suffered from dementia. All these encounters made me even more interested to understand the human mind.

Whenever I had questions, I would search online for the answer, but I found that online articles were very often qualitative and brief in nature. This prompted my desire to study it deeply in university, but it also helped me realise that psychology was in reality far more quantitative and research-based. This further fueled my interest in this subject, as I enjoy research. I went through three years of research education with my secondary school, in each year undertaking a research topic and writing a report with a teacher-mentor. In Secondary 3, I took on the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Program, which involved a mentorship with a university professor, as well as the publishing of the final research paper. In addition, I went through H1 Project Work with my junior college. As a potential student, I know I will enjoy researching and building upon the research of others very much.

I think that psychology is a diverse field, and it presents many career options. I want to take psychology not just because I am deeply interested in it, but also because I believe understanding people is fundamental to helping them. I wish to be a social worker in the future and work with disadvantaged groups in my society. My extensive interactions with various groups of people has taught me that, while human behaviour can be generalised, it is a world that is complex and far from fully understood. Learning psychology will help me understand that world a little better. I dream of helping other people as a social worker, but to offer the best help, I first need to learn all I can about people.

~ Caleb Lee

interview guide

computer science

FORMAT

One applicant's experience: 1 question with many parts, nothing on PS was asked (This may vary from person to person). Time (5 mins) was given to ask questions at the end.
Another applicant's experience: 5 min about PS as a warm-up, then around 20 min for 3 questions, with 5 min for questions.
The interviewer had a physics background, and he interviewed all the CompSci and NatSci candidates from SG in that year. (This may vary as well, depending on the location of interview)

QUESTIONS

You could be asked a maths question. Generally such questions start with very simple parts that get harder as you progress. These could involve algebra. The questions could also be related to optimisations, so you may want to read about this.
Another question you could be asked is: "what's the best way to go about guessing the number I have in my head, given that it's between 1 and 100" → then the interviewer may try to generalise it, e.g. between 1 and n
Do not worry if you are unable to give the exact CS term for a question being asked (and it is highly unlikely that you are asked such factual recall questions.) It's not compulsory to have a background in CS or know about any particular CS concept before applying. If you are good at maths (particularly algebra), and keep thinking about what the interview is trying to guide you to, you should be fine.

PREPARATION

During the interview, try to catch on to what the interviewer is trying to guide you towards. It's ok to make mistakes as long as you aren't insisting on your wrong answers.
Explain your reasoning for why / how you arrived at your answer (even if it feels very simple) → this shows your understanding, and the interviewer can know where to correct you / give you hints if you are wrong
The key point is to explain your thinking process, so you must say it out loud while you think. Then it will be fine to make mistakes or get stuck as long as they follow your problem solving steps and you can catch their hints quickly. The aim of the interview is to mimic supervisions (the unique small-group teaching style offered by Oxbridge), and they want to see if you are suitable for this type of learning. New A-level Maths/Further Maths questions are suggested, or maybe questions from CSAT (https://openclimb.io/csat/#csat-explained), and try to explain your steps to your friends as mock interviews.

RESOURCES

Watch mock interviews online, especially the one by Churchill: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I03cCH-TG_w

economics

FORMAT

Taken in 2020, online:
Single 20 minute interview by two supervisors at the college (usually longer)
10 minutes were spent on discussing a piece of reading which was given beforehand (20 minutes to prepare and reflect on the piece), and the other 10 were spent on a math question, to work out in front of them

QUESTIONS

This may vary by college, but it is possible that you are asked to read an article and comment on it. In this case, you may want to discuss economics concepts applicable or discussed in the article.
They may or may not ask about your personal statement.
An important concept in Economics is trade-offs so this can be discussed either in relation to an article or other subjects that may arise during the interview.
Given that the Cambridge course is very mathematical, you can also be asked a math question, such as a probability question. This would probably be guided and given to you in parts, as it is not a math interview after all.

PREPARATION

Read up on current affairs, e.g. the economist podcast.
Brush up on math, especially JC level stats.
There are mock papers for the ECAA online, which cover quite a bit of math too, although do note that the format of the ECAA has changed quite drastically over the past few years

RESOURCES

Generic mock interview on the Cambridge Youtube channel

geography

FORMAT

1 interview, used to have an exam which has since been removed.

QUESTIONS

The interview is a 15-20min process. What is important to note is that the interviewer isn't even a geographer, so they aren't looking for very technical knowledge, rather the thought processes behind your answer and rationalisation is important.
May some diagrams and different kinds of graphs and ask for your opinion, with you having to speak your thought processes aloud on your conclusions and how you arrived there.

For example:
The interview would discuss concepts in geography in response to perhaps your personal statement, a hypothetical scenario or a figure or other data form presented.
In the case of data, you would want to first analyse and describe the data (e.g. this chart shows the relationship between xxx and xxx. We can see that countries with higher xxx tend to have greater xxx.). Subsequently, you would want to substantiate this with perhaps some reasons, even possibly giving a specific example. (I can see country xxx has a high rate of xxx). You can then tie this into the bigger overall concepts. If you are struggling, examiner may step in to help guide in with leading questions on another perspective to consider. Preferably this is kept to a minimum, with you able to keep the discussion continuing.

You should make a conscious effort to display both knowledge in human and physical geography even if the material does not allow for it. Don't treat it as an SBQ - rather it is more of a platform to showcase your ability to link knowledge and present it relevantly to the material.
Showing a wide breadth of knowledge is important, and a good understanding of theories (for example, Macdonalisation, feminist geopolitics, Maslow hierarchy of development, Bilbao effect). Linking to theories can be a good way to help signpost your knowledge.

For example, for a hypothetical question on gender and geopolitics, a response like "The direct correlation that can be seen between low rates of female education and poverty in the graph makes me think of something I had previously read on feminist geopolitics. The concept that the idea of the home/economy that we understand it to be could be wrong…derived from a male perspective…perhaps more female representation could lead to alternative and more equitable results…" would elevate your answer.

PREPARATION

Read more - focus on breadth not depth. Find something you really like about the geography syllabus taught in Cambridge and read up a book on their reading list to help you formulate ideas.

RESOURCES

Focus more of linking knowledge. 1 book on the Cambridge reading list - "the two mile time machine" (on ice cores) - is quite an interesting read. "Homo deus: a brief history of tomorrow" may also be useful.

QUESTIONS

Personal statement based questions: It would be unlikely that the interviewer will ask you generic questions such as "why do you want to study law", but they are likely to grill you deeper on the more substantive content of your personal statement. You will have to be prepared to talk about the issues that you raise in your personal statement.

Scenario based questions: questions in this category will typically be on topics like tort or criminal law. It is also possible for a scenario to be not a substantive one, but a simple scenario that leads into a more philosophical discussion (you can't quite prepare for these so I will just give some tips on how to answer tort/criminal scenarios). Even though you do not need to "know any law", it is good to understand some basic concepts to draw upon as they can help you reason better. You should focus on your reasoning rather than be concerned with what is the right answer as quite often, in the final stages of the scenario based questions, the law is not quite settled and academic opinion is split. However, it is important to note that when the interviewer challenges your position, you must either rebut it and address all of the interviewer's concerns in full or accept the interviewer's position and reason why you were wrong at the beginning (do not be afraid to pause and think your response through). Never be stubborn and stick to what you are saying without addressing the interviewer's counter argument comprehensively, and always be willing to switch positions when you think that the interviewer's views make more logical sense than yours.

Tort scenarios: you can be asked on anything ranging from property damage, physical injury, occupier's liability, vicarious liability. While you do not need to know the law, it is important for you to understand some basic concepts regarding negligence. If you are asked a tort question, ask yourself the following questions:

1) Should the defendant in question owe a duty of care to the plaintiff
2) Is this duty of care breached?
3) is it objectively foreseeable that such a loss would be caused because the duty was breached?
4) Was anything done to prevent the outcome?
5) Compensation: return to initial state of affairs and/or damages for loss of enjoyment

Tort scenarios may also engage in trickier issues of pure and consequential economic loss, remoteness and vicarious liability. Again, you do not need to know the law, but if you are asked on such issues, you have to reason clearly and address why a loss is too far fetched to be attributed to the defendant and when should an employer be liable for an employee's tort.

Criminal scenarios: again, you do not need to know any law but it is important to have a basic understanding of criminal law concepts as they can be helpful if you are asked a criminal law scenario
Mens rea and actus reus: the act must cause the consequence and the act must be accompanied by the requisite mental element of the crime (usually intention/recklessness for most crimes). Causation can be tricky (ie did the act cause the prohibited outcome), consider a real USA case called People v Lewis where D shoots V, V will probably die from the gunshot but slits his own throat to end his suffering before that happens. Did D cause V's death? Be prepared to reason such scenarios logically.
Intention = i) you either intend a result directly or ii) if you did not really intend a specific outcome, but you know that the consequence is a virtual certainty of the action and you still proceed.
Recklessness: foresaw a risk in your actions but unreasonably run that risk

Even though you are rated on a numerical scale of 1-10 for your interview, ultimately your interviewer is human and they are looking for students that they would like to teach. Showing that you are **emotionally intelligent** is therefore also important, remember to smile, be friendly and act happy and energetic and look like you are genuinely enjoying yourself in the interview.

PREPARATION

It is usually unavoidable to engage in a conversation regarding jurisprudential and/or moral philosophy issues since your personal statement will probably touch on broader conceptual issues about the law/what the law should be when explaining your interest to pursue the academic study of the law at university. Quite often, candidates also criticise certain aspects of Singapore's legal system in their personal statements as a way of engaging in philosophical inquiry about issues surrounding what a legal system should be like (if this is you, do be prepared to contrast these aspects with UK law).

It is therefore important for you to be familiar with some basic concepts and engage them during your discussion; useful concepts include and is not limited to

- Utilitarianism (Bentham and Mill) along with Mill's harm principle
- Kantian ideas such as his categorical imperatives and Kingdom of ends etc
- Rawl's veil of ignorance

RESOURCES

Justice by Michael J Sandel gives a quick crash course on how philosophy interacts with law.

mathematics

FORMAT

During COVID, there were 2 interviews, one by the college over zoom and one online for international students. In normal years there would only be 1 but there was some mix-up since all interviews were online due to COVID, so this could really vary based on individual.

Internationals interview:

- Interviewer may talk a little about the personal statement, mostly to try to establish a friendly atmosphere. 2 maths questions, some with multiple parts; wants you to explain your thought process
- There was also a test paper that was administered online, questions covered mostly topics in the UK Further Maths syllabus.

College interview:

- 2 parts to the interview, 30 minutes each for the pure maths interview and for the applied maths interview. 2 interviewers for each part. 5 questions each, with some parts to it.

QUESTIONS

For a person who wrote about combinatorics in PS: questions on combinatorics, such as how to distribute objects into boxes (or equivalents), graph drawing questions (for these - think about the limits, asymptotes, symmetry, maxima and minima as well as periods if it looks periodic. certainly you may not be expected to or able to draw the graph immediately but instead think it through) or calculus/algebra questions.

Make sure to clarify terms of the question (and it also shows your awareness of what may affect an answer).

PREPARATION

Make sure you know what you wrote in your personal statement. Practice writing Maths and speaking about your thinking process out loud, that is the part interviewers look out for to show understanding. If the interview is going to be online, you will likely have some paper to write on. Practice writing, raising it to show to the camera, explaining to the interviewer your thought process as you write (there shouldn't be awkward silence as you scribble out equations!!). For combinatorics questions, Singapore H3 Maths has a combinatorics part of the syllabus which covers most of what they will ask.

Practice graph drawing, you can think of questions, try drawing the graph and check the answer on desmos.

Also make sure you know how to do proofs! If you don't look at the H3 Maths notes. For pure maths parts especially some methods of proof may be needed.

RESOURCES

https://sites.google.com/site/oxbridgeinterviewquestions/mathematics

TheStudentRoom

This website offers some past admissions test questions (part of the interview) for Trinity:

https://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/subjects/mathematics/

Answers to Trinity admissions questions in this thread:

https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=3682855

QUESTIONS

The Cambridge medicine interviews are very scientific, with an admissions tutor having previously said that they are looking more at "why you want to study medicine at Cambridge" not "why do you want to become a doctor". Do remember this when writing your personal statement as well.

Other common topics discussed in medical school interviews are ethics and the four pillars of ethics, drug discovery and testing, such as why pharmaceuticals are so expensive (due to many drugs which are tested but fail to gain approval/turn out not to be safe and long, arduous testing processes). In addition, it is important to recognize that medicine is a career that involves teamwork, so it is important to know the different stakeholders and individuals involved in patient care (nurses, medical technologists, nutritionists, allied health professionals, pharmacists, etc.).

Holistic health care has also gained more attention since COVID, so you may be asked about encouraging healthy lifestyles and the interplay between psychological and physiological medicine (An interesting study here: https://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/13/health/healing-wounds-linger-literally-after-marital-strife.html) and how doctors need to treat the patient, not the disease.

Remember to refresh your memory on any book you mention in your personal statement, as these books are very commonly mentioned in such statements and thus the interviewers are very familiar with them. Some interviewers like to use the school curriculum as a base to start discussions, so you could review the relevant parts of A-level Biology as well, if for instance you are in NS and may have forgotten parts of it. If you mention that you are interested in research or have done a project, it would be good to refresh your memory on the techniques used in the project, as well as a big picture on how the project would affect the practice of medicine.

PREPARATION

Read on certain common health problems and gain a simple understanding of them, perhaps diseases such as atherosclerosis, myocardial infarctions, the different types of cancers, strokes, allergies, inflammation, the common flu and perhaps mental illnesses. Read on the different types of screening programmes available in the UK and Singapore, and why we only screen certain diseases (you can read on the 10 principles of screening). In line with this, you may be asked to calculate the probability of an individual actually having a disease given a positive test, and the difference between screening and confirmatory/diagnosis tests.

COVID may be a popular topic now, so perhaps you could read on the scientific basis for different pandemic reduction measures, how viruses mutate, why different public health measures were taken before and after the vaccine roll-outs and the scientific basis for the different types of vaccines and tests (PCR vs antigen vs antibody)

RESOURCES

The NHS has a comprehensive 'layman' guide for diseases here: https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/a-to-z, You would certainly not need to know all of them but a quick glance would be good. Read some scientific articles just so you have something extra to talk about, or if you are asked. There are some books that give you interesting insights into medicine and also make for good material in the personal statements, Atul Gawande's books are good for surgery. https://www.prospectivedoctor.com/15-books-medical-school-applicants/).

natural sciences

FORMAT

Online

- Platform used for interview differs.
- Before commencing the interview, the interviewer should do a sound and connection check.
- The platform should have an online drawing/whiteboard function – it is a good idea to keep a drawing tablet at hand should you need to show any diagrams. If not, drawing on paper and showing it to the interviewer is fine as well.

In person

- Sat next to a professor and solved problems on paper.
- May be at your school/other location.

QUESTIONS

You can be asked a mix of bio, chem, phys and math questions. In general, revise your O and A level concepts and questions. You could be asked to explain or relate different concepts such as boiling point trends with IMFs. Alternatively, you could be asked to discuss various hypotheses or theories, in terms of their utility and limitations, especially in the biological sciences. You could be asked about concepts, not in A Level syllabus and thus new to you (or you could have read about it previously) and solved some problems based on the knowledge presented to you. Specifically for maths, it could be asked on its own, such as a graph sketching or problem solving, or in relation to a science (such as a probability question in genetics, or on disease testing (how likely is a positive test actually accompanied by a true diagnosis, compared to false positives)).

TIPS

Familiarise yourself with the online platform used (e.g. how to change input/output).
Questions asked may not be something you are familiar with/have seen before; they are meant to find out whether you can process and apply new knowledge quickly. If you don't understand the problem, don't hesitate to clarify.
Talk through your thought process, even if you do not know the answer. The interviewer can tell if you are on the right track and guide you to the answer.
You don't need to get the correct answer immediately. One thing they're looking out for is teachability. The interviewer would want you to draw links from your prior knowledge to deduce something novel.
You should probably look up your interviewer before the interview to get a sense of the areas you will be tested more on. You also have the chance to ask the professor questions at the end, they're usually more than happy to share about their research.
Review your personal statement, as they can ask a quick question or two on its contents.
Don't be late.

PREPARATION

Not much to do actually, it's an academic interview, just revise through your concepts like you're going for an exam. But think of it as a learning experience instead of a test; go in with a relaxed mind. Read up on any topics you might have mentioned in your personal statement. Practice mental sums. Perhaps read up on the UK A level syllabus to see what professors might expect of you. Subject yourself to viva!! Try tutoring your friends and talking out your thought processes to be more fluent.

RESOURCES

https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/interviews

admissions test guide

economics: ECCA

FORMAT

2 sections of math, one harder than the other, and an essay based on an article prompt.

PREPARATION

Practice loads of math and read up on current affairs! However because no one really knows how to prepare for the essay portion, one might be better served preparing for math intensely.

RESOURCES

The economics faculty website should have past year papers, although note that there was a format change that may render some of the earlier papers obsolete.

engineering: ENGAA

FORMAT

MCQs without calculator with about 90 seconds per question. Not an easy test!

PREPARATION

Do all past papers timed as well, and make sure you read through the syllabus. Memorise some formulae and practice doing mental maths in general.

RESOURCES

https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses/engineering#entry-requirements

law: LNAT

FORMAT

MCQs & an essay
MCQ: similar to ICAS English questions. Generally require reading skills, comprehension and logic! Not very hard, but rather very tricky! Be sure to not just look for the 'right' answer and immediately move on. Instead, read through all the options and choose the MOST right answer.
Essay: reading widely is the best way to prepare. The topics are quite broad and are generally on current affairs. It has similarities to GP essays in terms of argumentativeness and structuring of your points. Keep your writing succinct and clear, and be sure to demonstrate your argumentative skills and writing abilities!

PREPARATION

Past papers are available online. Practise especially the MCQ questions and be sure to time yourself!

RESOURCES

2010 example paper: https://lnat.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Practice-Test-2010-paper-1.pdf
Many websites & resources online

- Only 2% of applicants score above 34
- It is not disclosed what the scores of successful applicants are.
- Scoring above 30 would put you in good stead! Of course, a score >32 would put you over the edge. Do take note that average scores do differ from year to year.

math: STEP

FORMAT

2 papers, STEP II and STEP III, usually the conditions are around 1,1 to S, S.

RESOURCES

Past questions can be found here, as well as the mark boundaries, and solutions can be found on The Student Room.
https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses/engineering#entry-requirements

medicine: BMAT

FORMAT

3 sections: Section 1 on Thinking Skills, 32 MCQs in 1hr, Section 2 on Scientific Knowledge and Application, 2

PREPARATION

For section 1, do past papers and get familiar with the types of questions asked.

For section 2, go through the content here: https://www.admissionstesting.org/Images/47829-bmat-test-specification.pdf and make notes based on it, possibly even referring to UK A-level textbooks. As some content may not have been covered in the Singapore A-Level syllabus and/or you probably would not be taking all four math and sciences at A-levels, it is important to make sure you have all your ground covered in this sense.

For section 3, read some model answers available online, and write out 2-3 past essays as practice. There is a general structure that is implied by the specification, namely a short introduction, one point for and against, and a short conclusion. 30 mins is ample time, so do plan before writing and re-read your answer for grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors after, as this contributes to the score.

RESOURCES

https://www.admissionstesting.org/for-test-takers/bmat/preparing-for-bmat/practice-papers/ Do remember to check what your score would be converted to out of 9, so that you know your rough standing.

A score of 5 in each of Section 1 and 2 is a good score in general for the BMAT, but for a competitive application to Cambridge you should aim for at least a 6. Some Singapore students get in with about a 5.5 each, likely with a strong personal statement and interview performance.

natural sciences: NSAA

FORMAT

New format since 2020; older years' papers have different formats

2 sections:

- Section 1 (60 minutes) consists of 4 parts (maths, physics, chemistry, biology), candidates choose 2 to answer (maths and one other science); each part consists of 20 MCQs.
- Section 2 (60 minutes) consists of 3 parts, candidates choose only 1 to answer; each part consists of 20 MCQs.
- No calculators allowed.
- Each part is done separate

PREPARATION/RESOURCES

Check through the exam specifications (NATURAL SCIENCES ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT (NSAA) Content Specification) for a list of tested content, as some content isn't covered in the Singapore A Level/IB syllabus.

- E.g. For physics, Young's Modulus is not in the A Level syllabus, but is in the NSAA exam specifications. Some other things to learn/revisit include Kirchhoff's laws and optics from O Levels.
- For chemistry: knowledge of flame tests, time of flight mass spectrometer, E/Z isomerism.
- For biology: ecosystems, physiology in general (e.g. cardiovascular system, electrocardiogram, sinoatrial node), since they cover that in UK A levels but not in Singapore A levels.

Section 1 relies heavily on O level knowledge (especially for biology since O level focuses more on physiology) so refresh and re-read your notes.

Do the past year papers to get an idea of the format, standard of difficulty and time requirements of the exam.

- In particular, calculators are not allowed, so get good at doing simple calculations quickly.

The papers are meant to be extremely tight on time so you must have good time management (skip questions if needed, use efficient methods to solve problems, etc.).

- That said, don't be worried if you cannot finish the paper in time, it's designed to be very challenging.
- But don't leave blanks!

MATH

No formula sheet given, so familiarise yourself with important formulae.

Time is tight, solve questions quickly.

Gotta go fast.

PHYSICS

No formula sheet either, so familiarise yourself with important formulae.

Mostly calculation questions (barely any conceptual), so practice solving problems quickly.

Don't be afraid to skip a question if it gets too tedious.

CHEMISTRY

Pretty standard questions in section 1. Section 2 is a bit of a gamble without doing H3 chemistry. You need to be comfortable with stereoisomerism (E/Z notation), new mechanisms & mass spectroscopy which are more advanced than H2. Expect many calculation questions (e.g. thermodynamics, mole concept, equilibria).

BIOLOGY

For section 1 there are questions which are an easy giveaway if you are familiar with the content. However, many questions tend to be less memorisation heavy, but rather more on application, comprehension skills and time management. Lots of data and graphs to read and analyse which are time consuming, especially in section 2. Many calculation questions.

credits

This publication would not have been possible without the kind contribution from several CUMSA members, who contributed their personal statements and wrote sections of the guide relevant to their course, college, interview and admissions test.

- Sophia He
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Some of those contributing their personal statements have chosen to remain anonymous.

THANKS FOR READING!

We hope you've found this guide helpful. If you have any other questions, feel free to DM us on Instagram (@cumsa_); we'd be happy to help!!

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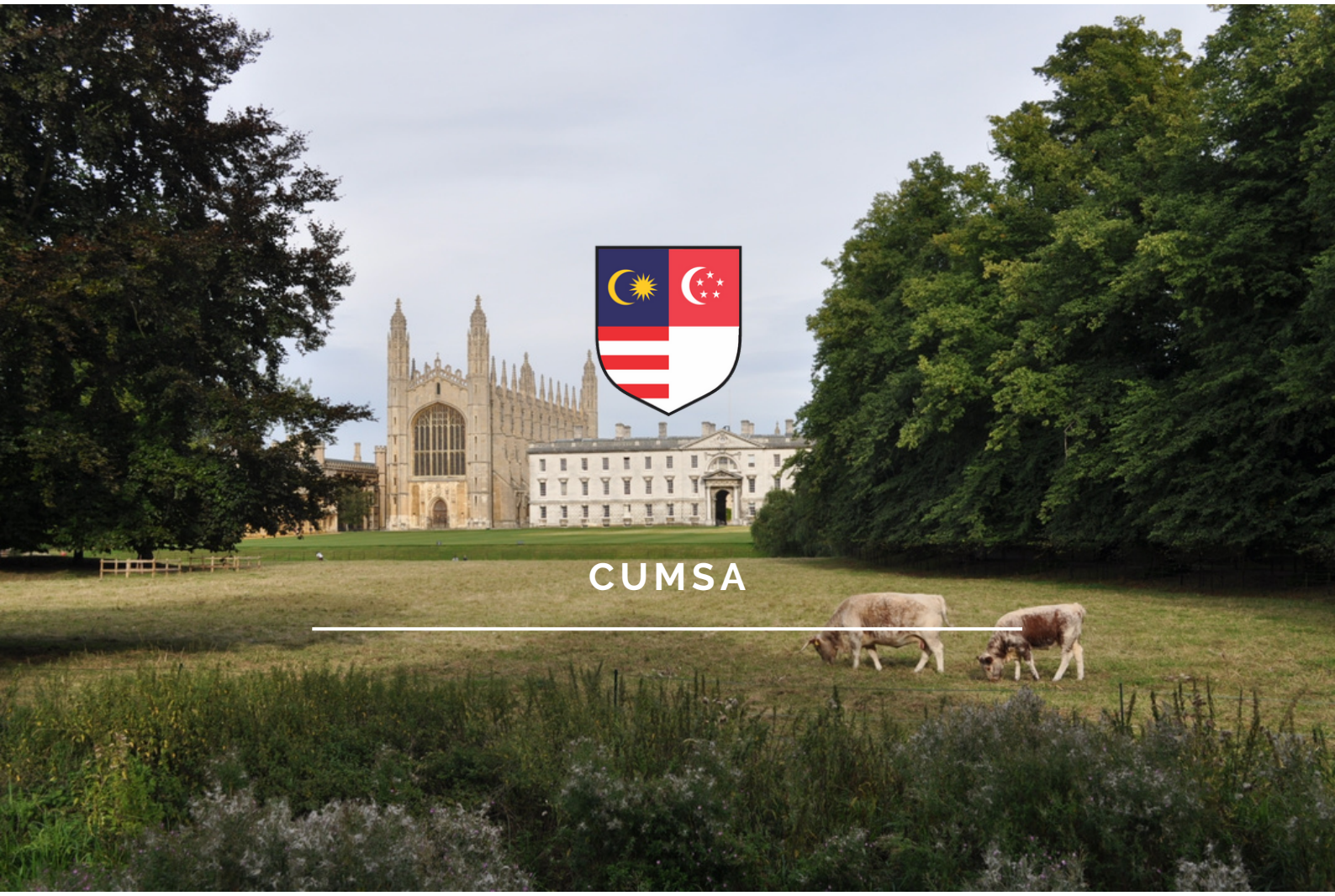
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Anne-Marie
Associate,
Investment Services Public Markets

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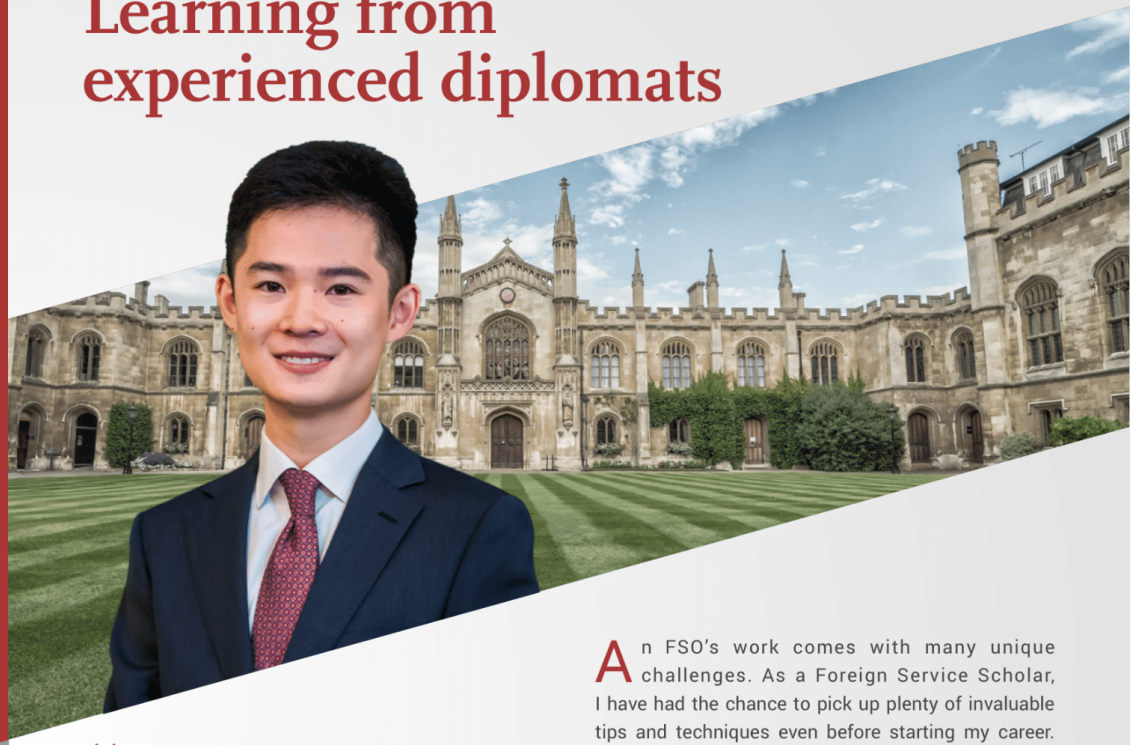

> "The opportunities to learn from more experienced colleagues and build my network of contacts while I am still studying is just one of the many advantages of being a Foreign Service Scholar, and will be something I continue to value going forward."

Joshua Lim
University of Cambridge, UK
Leiden University, The Netherlands

▼ Joshua getting advice from senior FSOs during his Pre-Departure Programme

An FSO's work comes with many unique challenges. As a Foreign Service Scholar, I have had the chance to pick up plenty of invaluable tips and techniques even before starting my career. During my studies in the UK, my mentor was an FSO who worked at the Singapore High Commission in London. He never failed to catch up with me and was always willing to offer guidance and advice. Even when we could not meet in person due to COVID-19 restrictions, we would still keep in touch via email.

During my internships at the various directorates and overseas missions, there was also always something to learn from the senior FSOs and supervisors I met. They all had interesting and unique career experiences to share. The opportunities to learn from more experienced colleagues and build my network of contacts while I am still studying is just one of the many advantages of being a Foreign Service Scholar, and will be something I continue to value going forward. Looking ahead, as I gain more experiences of my own, I hope to share them with new FSOs too!

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In the UK, besides offices and mixed-use developments, Mapletree owns, manages, and develops student housing properties.

At present, Mapletree owns a total of 35 student accommodation assets across 19 cities in the UK with over 9,000 beds. This includes the 453-bedder Westwood Student Mews. Located between Coventry and Warwick, it was developed on land acquired in May 2018 and construction was completed in December 2019.

Additionally in the US and Canada, Mapletree owns 21 student accommodation assets with over 15,000 beds.

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Student Castle Cambridge

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