Information for Candidates Attending Interviews at Magdalene College

Getting to Cambridge
Please make your travel arrangements in such a way that you leave plenty of time to get to Cambridge, find the College and locate the rooms where your interviews will take place. A web-based map can be found at [http://www.cam.ac.uk/map/college-am.html](http://www.cam.ac.uk/map/college-am.html) and directions to the College can be found at [http://www.magd.cam.ac.uk/how-to-find-us](http://www.magd.cam.ac.uk/how-to-find-us) with a map of the College itself is at [http://www.magd.cam.ac.uk/college-layout](http://www.magd.cam.ac.uk/college-layout). We will be happy to help advise about travel plans if you are in any doubt or you may find it helpful to contact the Cambridge Tourist Information Centre (0871-226-8006, email at info@visitcambridge.org or via [http://www.visitcambridge.org/VisitCambridge/Home.aspx](http://www.visitcambridge.org/VisitCambridge/Home.aspx)).

Arrival

By Train
There are regular buses from the city railway station to the College. The Citi 1, Citi 3 or Citi 7 buses run from the railway station to the city centre. The single fare is approximately £1.80 and a day ticket is £4. The buses run every 10 minutes between 7 am and 7 pm. The journey takes approximately 15 – 20 minutes. There is also a taxi rank. The taxi journey from the station to the College takes approximately 10 – 15 minutes, but in the rush hour the journey could take 30 minutes. Taxis cost approximately £8 - £12 depending on the time of day. Alternatively, it takes about 30 – 40 minutes to walk.

By Car
Car parks are marked on the map, but please note that some are only accessible from one side of the city because of the pedestrianisation of the city centre. There are also Park-and-Ride schemes operating in Cambridge. The Park and Ride car parks cost £1, paid for at the ticket machines, and the buses from these car parks run every 10 minutes during the day, although with less frequent service in the early morning and evening. The bus fare is £2.70 return from the ticket machines (it’s a good idea to have the exact amount available), or £2.70 return from the bus driver. The City Council encourages the use of Park-and-Ride sites. Information and maps showing car parks can be found at [http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20149/park_and_ride](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20149/park_and_ride). Please be aware the Park-and-Ride service is very popular and can be extremely busy at times. Please allow time for queues at the ticket machines.

By Coach
Buses arrive at Drummer Street central bus station or Parker’s Piece bus stops from other towns and from major airports. The bus station is a 15 minute walk from the College. There is also a taxi rank near the bus station if the weather is inclement.

Things to do on Arrival
When you arrive in College, go to the Porters’ Lodge (the main entrance to the College on Magdalene Street). If there are any messages from us regarding your interviews they will be left for you with the porters. The porters also issue keys to rooms to those candidates who are staying in College overnight. Rooms are available from 1 pm and you are asked to vacate your room by 9 am. There is a room available where bags can be left securely if your room is unavailable or after you have checked out but you are still in College.

You should bring a copy of your email of invitation to interview with you and keep it handy in case of a query regarding your interviews. You are urged to check on the location of interview rooms before
the time of your interview if possible. A number of our current students will be on hand to help you if you need assistance finding a room and the College Porters will help to direct you also.

**Accommodation**

Collect the key to your room, if one has been reserved for you, from the porters. You should remember to hand the key back when you vacate the room. There is no charge for accommodation.

**Meals**

Meals are available in Ramsay Hall, Cripps Court at the following times:

- **Breakfast:**
  - 7:30 am – 9:00 am Monday – Saturday, 8 to 19 December
  - 8:30 am – 9:30 am Sunday 14 December

- **Brunch:**
  - 11:00 am – 1:30 pm Saturday 6 & Sunday 7 December

- **Lunch:**
  - 12.30 pm – 1.30 pm Monday – Sunday, not Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 December

- **Dinner:**
  - 6.00 pm – 7.00 pm Sunday 7 - Friday 12 December
  - 6.30 pm – 7:30 pm Saturday 13 - Sunday 14 December
  - 6.00 pm – 7.00 pm Monday 15 - Thursday 18 December

These are all cafeteria service. You should explain to the staff in Ramsay Hall that you are an admissions candidate and they will look after you. There is no charge for meals.

**Before Interviews**

You should check your email of invitation to interview and see whether or not you are required to visit the Admissions Office to collect material in advance of your interview. If you are required to read a passage etc. before your subject interview, you should collect it 15 – 30 minutes (depending on the subject specific requirements) before the subject interview. Sometimes it is necessary to schedule interviews close together. If it is the case that your interviews do not allow a 30 minute gap before the subject interview, call in to the Admissions Office earlier to allow a clear 30 minutes to prepare the passage etc. A room “The Quiet Room” will be available where you will be able to study the passages for discussion at interview. Candidates using this room are requested not to talk, so as not to disturb other candidates in the room. Anyone accompanying you, ie parents or friends, are asked not to go into The Quiet Room. We also ask candidates not to use smart phones or anything similar in preparing unseen passages for interviews.

There is also another waiting room – the JCR - available to all candidates – where tea and coffee are available all day. Student Helpers will be in the Porters’ Lodge and the JCR to help. Whilst it may be tempting to discuss interview or test questions with other interview candidates or student helpers, it is only likely to disadvantage your own application and we suggest you discuss topics of a more general nature. The College Bar is also available as a waiting room for parents or friends who might be accompanying you to Cambridge.

When you go to your interview, please arrive punctually and observe any notices on the interview room door. These will give instructions regarding whether you should knock, enter or wait to be called. Please do not conduct loud conversations outside the interview room since candidates or interviewers inside may find it distracting!

**Tests**

You may have been asked to sit a test before your interviews. We are aware that students study topics in different orders, may be at different stages in their education and study different syllabuses etc. Do not feel worried if you have not covered all topics addressed on the question paper or if you felt that the test was particularly difficult. These tests may serve a series of purposes. Sometimes they provide one or more topics for discussion at one of the interviews. In other cases they may help interviewers elucidate your current level of knowledge in a particular area prior to beginning a discussion.
The Interviews
You will have been invited to attend a subject interview. This deals specifically with the subject you have chosen to study and the subjects you have covered or are covering for school examinations. If you have not studied formally for some time, you will have an opportunity to discuss how your recent career will fit in with your proposed course.

You will have been invited to a ‘general interview’ as well as the subject interview. In some subjects the ‘general interview’ may well include an additional academic component if the Director of Studies has a broad portfolio of objectives and criteria to assess. The ‘general’ component of this second interview may discuss such matters as your school course, your interest in your chosen subject, your plans for the future as well as any extra-curricular activities you may be involved in. There will also be an opportunity for you to mention anything you wish to add to your application form and to ask any questions about the course, College or admissions procedure that you may have. Questions designed to test your general intelligence or suppleness of thought will be included in this interview.

It is College policy to undertake interviews in pairs as far as possible. We feel this is less intimidating than a ‘panel’ and should help you feel more at ease during your discussions. In either interview, the interviewers may wish to cover other areas not mentioned here in order to assess your application. Your interviewers are likely to take notes during the interview. This is normal and you should not be worried. We often have many candidates to assess and notes taken during the interview often help interviewers recollect their thoughts on individual performances at decision meetings.

In addition to these College guidelines, you may like to read the University Interview guidelines at [www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/interviews](http://www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/interviews). This web page also includes a link to a video of a typical Cambridge interview. We hope this information may be of some use in helping to relieve any of the concerns you may have.

Dress
We are often asked how candidates should dress for their interviews. You’ll be pleased to hear that we do not judge candidates on their wardrobes! Generally, candidates choose to dress a little formally (i.e. not in jeans) but it should not be necessary for you to buy special clothes for the occasion. It is important that you wear clothing that is comfortable; i.e. if you know you will be walking from the station to College, don’t put on a brand new pair of shoes! Please bear in mind that Cambridge is often very cold and wet in December and you will have to walk in the open between interviewers’ rooms, Ramsay Hall for meals, etc. Coats are essential! If you are in doubt, please feel free to telephone the Admissions Office for advice.

Undergraduate Hosts
Current Magdalene students will meet you at the Porters’ Lodge when you arrive and be on hand throughout your stay to help you find your way to your room (if you are staying overnight) and the rooms where your interviews are being held. They will also be in the JCR (where tea and coffee will be available) from 8 am – 10 pm to answer any queries you may have and help in any way. In the evenings TV/dvds will be available to any interview candidates that are interested.

Library
The library, in Second Court, will be open during the interview period. Current Magdalene students will be using the library and we would appreciate it if you did not wander in unannounced. Should you wish to visit the library, please ask a Magdalene student host (see above) to take you. If you wish to use the library facilities for a more extended period, please ask your student helper to introduce you to the library staff who will be able to help you.
Any Problems
If you have any difficulties during your visit to Magdalene, please do not hesitate to talk to the Porters or to come up to the Admissions Office on A staircase, First Court, which is open from 8.30 am to 5 pm. The Admissions Office staff will be happy to try to help. The Porters Lodge is open 24 hours a day.

Important
If you are delayed on your way to your interviews and think you may be late, it is absolutely imperative that you telephone us on 01223-332135 as soon as possible. We shall do what we can to try and re-schedule your interviews and make alternative arrangements for you.

Finally
Please note that the interviews are only one part of the admissions process. It is unlikely that you will feel unhappy with your performance – we try to make all our candidates feel relaxed so that they can do their best – but even if you are not on particularly good form on the day, all is not lost. We pay close attention to other application material, such as personal statement, school references, previous academic performance, and (where applicable) submitted work or test results.

Once interviews are complete we shall write to all candidates early in January to inform them of the outcome of their application. This letter will state one of the three possible outcomes of your application:

1. We may make you an offer. If you have already completed your studies at school this may be unconditional. Most offers will, however, include academic and/or financial conditions.

2. Your previous academic record and/or interview performances were promising but a place here cannot be offered at this stage. Your application will be made available for consideration by other colleges through the inter-collegiate Winter Pool*. This may result in (i) you being made an offer by us (if we still have places available) or by another college; (ii) you may be invited back to Cambridge for an interview by another college; (iii) your application may be unsuccessful.

3. Your application may be unsuccessful. This will obviously be disappointing for you. However we have many very able candidates every year and typically only ca. 25% are successful in their applications to Cambridge. Consequently we are forced to turn away a large number of strong candidates, many of whom go on to very successful academic studies elsewhere. Whatever the outcome of your application we wish you well and hope you find the interview process a stimulating and enjoyable experience!

*The Winter Pool is held early in January and candidates will be notified of the outcome as soon as possible. Strong candidates from all Colleges are compared in the Intercollegiate Pool. This is an important component of our moderation process and helps us ensure that the last few remaining places on each course are offered to the strongest candidates irrespective of the College to which they may initially have applied.