

Oxbridge Interview Report

Please answer in as much detail as possible. Your responses will definitely help other Surbiton girls to win a place at Oxford or Cambridge.

Name: Amber Dickinson

University: Cambridge

Subject: Classics

Written test sat when at Oxford or Cambridge: Of what did it comprise?

Translation test, 1 hour

Prose: letter from Erasmus to a pupil about a fight he had witnessed between a maid and the lady of the house.

Verse: Horace Epodes 7

How, out of 10, would you rate your performance in this written test? ~~6~~ 7

First Interview

College: St Johns

Subject, if applying for joint honours: Classics

Names of Interviewer(s) and / or position within College, if known (e.g., Admissions Tutor):

Dr Sue Colwell, Tutor, Director of Studies in Mathematics for Natural Sciences

Were you given anything to look at before going into the interview? If so, please give as many details as possible (including how long you were given to prepare).

If you were given something to prepare, what did they ask you about it once in the interview room?

To what extent was the interview based around your personal statement- none / a bit / quite a lot (underline one)? Please give some examples of questions asked about your personal statement.

- Why Classics? Why St Johns?
- Explain a bit about your EPQ.
- Describe a story from classical mythology and make it exciting?
- What do you have to do as Head Girl?
- Say my daughter was looking at coming to your school - how would you sell it to me?
- What things would you get involved in at St Johns and Cambridge?
- Who is a modern day great orator?

Were you required to send written work to the university before interview Yes / No (underline one). If "Yes", to what extent was the interview based around it- none / a bit / quite a lot (underline one)? Please give some examples of questions asked about your written work.

Sent in two pieces of written work of literary criticism.

This was not covered in the general interview but was used as a start off point in the subject interview,

Please write in the space below as many other questions as you can remember not covered above.

- Can you think of times when someone takes revenge or seeks to discredit someone who has 'dethroned' them?
- What makes a great speaker?
- Why did you choose your particular A-levels?
- Explain a bit about your time working in Greece
- What do you like to do in your spare time for relaxation?

Which question or kind of question did you find the most difficult to answer?

Mythological story was quite a surprise - had a mind blank
She was quite blunt with her questions and didn't make a lot of eye contact.

How, out of 10, would you rate your performance in this interview? 7

How well did your mock interview(s) prepare you for this one? (Please underline one of the following.) No use at all / A bit useful, but not much / Useful preparation / Extremely useful- it felt very similar indeed.

Lastly, how do you think that you could have been better prepared for this interview?

Perhaps more practice at really abstract, random questions designed to throw you/take you by surprise

Interview 2

College: St Johns Subject, if applying for joint honours: Classics

Names of Interviewer(s) and / or position within College, if known (e.g., Admissions Tutor):

Dr Emily Gomes University Reader in Latin Literature
Fellow and Director of Studies at St Johns
Dr Oliver Thomas Director of Studies (part 1)

Were you given anything to look at before going into the interview? If so, please give as many details as possible (including how long you were given to prepare).

If you were given something to prepare, what did they ask you about it once in the interview room?

To what extent was the interview based around your personal statement- none / a bit / quite a lot (underline one)? Please give some examples of questions asked about your personal statement.

- asked me about the differences between modern and ancient Greek language.
- Background on some of ~~the~~ the texts in my statement eg the Aeneid.

Were you required to send written work to the university before interview? Yes / No (underline one). If "Yes", to what extent was the interview based around it- none / a bit / quite a lot (underline one)? Please give some examples of questions asked about your written work.

They began looking at my written work and asking about the texts in them. Asked me to explore some different interpretations and link themes and images in Ovid's Met with the Iliad.
Comparing Scylla as a person to how she becomes in the Odyssey.

Please write in the space below as many other questions as you can remember not covered above.

- How does Lysias's style of speaking differ to Cicero's?
- What do you like to read that's not Classics related?
- How much do you think Virgil comments on Dido's marriage to Aeneas?"
- We discussed a poem I had written myself based around the myth of Echo and Narcissus.
- How did you choose the meter in which to write your poem? What does that convey?
- ~~How~~ What is Ovid trying to do with his frequent references to feathers and wings ~~etc~~ in the poem?

Which question or kind of question did you find the most difficult to answer?

When we touched on Roman marriage ceremonies I did not know a lot about the customs involved-but then neither did the interviewer!

How, out of 10, would you rate your performance in this interview? 9

How well did your mock interview(s) prepare you for this one? (Please underline one of the following.) No use at all / A bit useful, but not much / Useful preparation / Extremely useful- it felt very similar indeed

Lastly, how do you think that you could have been better prepared for this interview?

This interview was nice as it felt more like a chat, very laidback and the interviewers asked questions based on what I had just said or mentioned, rather than specifically preprepared ones, which made the conversation flow more.

I felt I was well prepared for this interview.

Interview 3

College: Fitzwilliam

Subject, if applying for joint honours: Classics

Names of Interviewer(s) and / or position within College, if known (e.g., Admissions Tutor):

Dr Sara Owen Classics Lecturer
Miss L Scarratt Fellow and Director of Studies in Classics

Were you given anything to look at before going into the interview? If so, please give as many details as possible (including how long you were given to prepare).

If you were given something to prepare, what did they ask you about it once in the interview room?

To what extent was the interview based around your personal statement- none / a bit / quite a lot (underline one)? Please give some examples of questions asked about your personal statement.

- Was Augustus consciously trying to gain absolute power?
- How was Ovid's poetry received by Augustus?
- ~~How~~ Do you think it was possible to get rid of Ovid's poems if they were banned, why do so many survive?
- Was Virgil's Aeneid propaganda for Augustus?
- How can Virgil be seen to be undercutting Augustus' regimes?
- EPR - How can the fall of Rome be viewed as a transformation.

Were you required to send written work to the university before interview? Yes / No (underline one). If "Yes", to what extent was the interview based around it- none / a bit / quite a lot (underline one)? Please give some examples of questions asked about your written work.

Please write in the space below as many other questions as you can remember not covered above.

- Do we need to know the context of texts to be able to understand and appreciate them?
- Can we trust the information we get from literature about the ancient world?

I was given a picture of a classical object which I had to ask questions about in order to gain information about it. And then I was asked questions about the artefact. (It was a Punic tombstone.)

- Does the prominence of Juno tell us anything about the province?
- What can we learn about the religion and beliefs regarding the dead from this?
- What do you notice that is unusual?
- What can we learn ~~from~~ about the person that is buried?

Which question or kind of question did you find the most difficult to answer?

The picture question was challenging as I did not feel like I could ask lots of questions.

How, out of 10, would you rate your performance in this interview? 8

How well did your mock interview(s) prepare you for this one? (Please underline one of the following.) No use at all / A bit useful, but not much / Useful preparation / Extremely useful- it felt very similar indeed.

Lastly, how do you think that you could have been better prepared for this interview?

Practice at looking at artefacts and deducing information about it.

Perhaps more study of Roman art and sculpture?

Oxbridge Interview Report

Please answer in as much detail as possible. Your responses will definitely help other Surbiton girls to win a place at Oxford or Cambridge.

Name: Chloe Lauder

University: Oxford

Subject: Classics IB

Written test sat when at Oxford or Cambridge: Of what did it comprise ?

No.

How, out of 10, would you rate your performance in this written test ?

7

First Interview

College: Lady Margaret Hall

Subject, if applying for joint honours:

Names of Interviewer(s) and / or position within College, if known (e.g., Admissions Tutor):

Amin Benaissa – Tutor for Classics

Christina Kuhn – Tutor in Ancient History

Were you given anything to look at before going into the interview ? If so, please give as many details as possible (including how long you were given to prepare).

A preparation piece comprising of one Latin passage, one Greek passage and its translation. I was asked to translate the Latin passage and comment on style (the text was GCSE level, I happened to have done it as GCSE it was a Catullus poem) and then comment on the differences between the Latin and the Greek (if I did Greek) if not the Latin and the English translation of the Greek passage. I was given this 20 minutes before my interview, and hence had 20 minutes to complete it and then went straight into the interview room.

If you were given something to prepare, what did they ask you about it once in the interview room ?

They asked me first to comment about it in general, and then considering my comments they create chain questioning which took place for about half the interview. They asked me the differences between the two pieces and then again chain questioning. However this was all on language, content and style, nothing about the context of the piece, as it was presumed the text was unknown, because they were looking to see how I reacted to that new material.

To what extent was the interview based around your personal statement- none / a bit / quite a lot (underline one) ? Please give some examples of questions asked about your personal statement.

The personal statement came up for about half my interview, although they only asked me on two sections of this, which were comments on things I had only written one words about, for example; from the words 'political turmoil', they asked me about the political turmoil during Cicero's reign as consul and then leading up to Augustus' dictatorship, and whether the political circumstances were worse before the dictatorship or after. They also asked about patroclus' role in the Iliad in chapter 16, even though I only said I had translated a couple of lines, not read it, producing chain questions such as why Homer used Patroclus as a character who was quite small and then had a whole chapter based on him and his death.

Were you required to send written work to the university before interview? Yes / No (underline one). If "Yes", to what extent was the interview based around it- none / a bit / quite a lot (underline one)? Please give some examples of questions asked about your written work.

I was asked nothing about my pieces of written work, because they presumed I already knew lots about that so wanted to catch me out on things I clearly didn't know much about and have to think on the spot about them.

Please write in the space below as many other questions as you can remember not covered above. (Not me) but someone going for the same course was asked to translate their personal statement into Latin.

Which question or kind of question did you find the most difficult to answer?
The question concerning Cicero because I didn't know much about the political turmoil, so couldn't answer in detail.

How, out of 10, would you rate your performance in this interview?
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How well did your mock interview(s) prepare you for this one? (Please underline one of the following.) No use at all / A bit useful, but not much / Useful preparation / Extremely useful- it felt very similar indeed.
The mock interview was nothing like the actual interview and not at all useful, none of the same questions came up and it was a completely different atmosphere.

Lastly, how do you think that you could have been better prepared for this interview?

It is impossible to prepare for these interviews because you never know what is going to come up, however possibly picked ever singly word in my personal statement to bits and think about all questions related to this, however that is impossible.

Interview 2

College: Lady Margaret Hall

Subject, if applying for joint honours:

Names of Interviewer(s) and / or position within College, if known (e.g., Admissions Tutor):

Christopher Sheilds
Gregory Ferrari

Were you given anything to look at before going into the interview? If so, please give as many details as possible (including how long you were given to prepare).

No

If you were given something to prepare, what did they ask you about it once in the interview room?

To what extent was the interview based around your personal statement- none / a bit / quite a lot (underline one)? Please give some examples of questions asked about your personal statement.

Were you required to send written work to the university before interview? Yes / No (underline one). If "Yes", to what extent was the interview based around it- none / a bit / quite a lot (underline one)? Please give some examples of questions asked about your written work.

Please write in the space below as many other questions as you can remember not covered above.

They gave me in the interview a series of statements, with two premises and a conclusion and I had to say whether they were valid or not valid (they gave me definitions of valid and premises before etc) they were abstract about fish flying etc.

It was mainly based on determinism and free will.

I was given a predicament, that the interviewer first, believed everything has a cause, then believed everything that has a cause is not free, then believed that we are free. I had to say which premise I disagreed with and help in solve this. They basically just wanted my opinion and to see how I could argue against something.

Which question or kind of question did you find the most difficult to answer?

The premise questions, stating which statement was valid, because he made them very confusing and in each circumstance tried to oppose what I had said with another argument

How, out of 10, would you rate your performance in this interview?

7

How well did your mock interview(s) prepare you for this one? (Please underline one of the following.) No use at all / A bit useful, but not much / Useful preparation / Extremely useful- it felt very similar indeed.

Lastly, how do you think that you could have been better prepared for this interview?

You cannot prepare because they just want your opinion and give you completely random things.

