

2025 Admissions Round Feedback

Classical Archaeology & Ancient History

Please note this is subject admissions feedback from the 2025 selection round—there will be changes each year, and these pages are only retained to provide a general indication of process.

The CAAH admissions tutors would like to thank all applicants for the time and care which they put into their applications. We are also grateful to referees for providing their supporting statements and for the encouragement and support which they give to applicants.

In Classical Archaeology and Ancient History, of 100 (110 in 2024) candidates who applied to Oxford, 84 (95 in 2024) were shortlisted for interview and 30 (26 in 2024) received offers for entry in October 2026. As in previous years, tutors across the University worked together to ensure that the best candidates from the entire cohort applying to Oxford were offered places, regardless of which college they had applied (it follows that the direct application to place ratios for each college are not necessarily indicative of a candidate's chance of success). At Keble, all six first-choice applicants were shortlisted and interviewed and two offers were made for 2026, filling the College quota for this subject. One other candidate had one further interview with tutors from a Faculty panel and received an offer from another College.

For Classical Archaeology & Ancient History, candidates are normally summoned for interview. Grounds for not summoning include: less good results in official examinations (especially GCSE); less good results predicted for A level and/or other impending examinations; less good written work showing lack of intellectual coherence or power of analysis, or serious inaccuracy; and lack of clear demonstration of interest in both Classical archaeology and ancient history in the personal statement.

In their assessment of individual applications, the tutors took account of contextual data concerning relative individual and school performance as well as some background characteristics related to place of residence. This information is available only for applicants from within the UK. An explanation of how the University uses contextual data may be found here:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/decisions/contextual-data>

Final selection was made on the basis of several factors, including achieved and predicted grades, personal statement, school report, written work, contextual information, and performance at interview. All interviews took place remotely, online. All shortlisted first-choice Keble candidates were interviewed twice, in each case by a panel which combined Classical archaeology and ancient history. In each interview candidates were asked to read and discuss a short ancient historical text (translated into English and adapted) which was sent electronically in advance. In a second segment, candidates were presented with one or more images for

description and discussion. The interview sometimes concluded with general questions generated from the UCAS Personal Statement and / or from the pre-submitted written work.

In admitting students, we hope to select those individuals who, from the evidence that we have available to us, are the most able and most likely to benefit from the course that we offer. Tutors were looking for evidence of analytical / reasoning ability, visual acuity / engagement with images / objects, communication skills, aptitude for the subject, enthusiasm / motivation for studying the course, and intellectual curiosity.

Experience suggests that some candidates may benefit from guidance on what it is that may constitute evidence for genuine enthusiasm / motivation for the course and intellectual curiosity. Examples may include recent (i.e. within the last one to two years) visits to archaeological sites or museums relating to the Classical World (broadly defined) plus the reading in translation of substantial portions of relevant ancient (as opposed to modern) authors, and especially historians. These activities may be combined with the use of a candidate's own initiative, driven by genuine curiosity, to investigate or follow-up on aspects which interest them personally. Tutors look favourably on candidates who are able to demonstrate that their commitment to Classical archaeology and ancient history is more than superficial, and that it has been thought through with equal care on both sides of the degree.

At Keble, Classical Archaeology & Ancient History, Archaeology & Anthropology, and Human Sciences form part of an integrated 'subject group' directed by two Tutorial Fellows, one in Archaeology and one in Anthropology. The subject group as a whole admits up to 9 candidates per year.

Further information about courses and selection criteria is available from the University website: <http://www.classics.ox.ac.uk/classical-archaeology-and-ancient-history.html>