



2019 Admissions Round Feedback

Chemistry

Please note this is subject admissions feedback from the 2019 selection round - there will be changes each year, and these pages are only retained to provide a general indication of process.

This year, we received 44 first choice applications to read Chemistry at Keble. Of these 10 were not called for interview on the basis that their grades were likely to be short of the standard University offer. The University operates a system by which some candidates in Chemistry are allocated to other colleges to ensure a more even spread of candidates: on the basis of this system, seven candidates were reassigned to other colleges before the interview process, and the remaining twenty seven candidates were interviewed at Keble over two days. Each of these candidates received two interviews at Keble: one on concepts in organic and inorganic chemistry, and the other in concepts in physical chemistry and mathematics. Each candidate was also asked a question related to a scientific concept mentioned in their UCAS form at some point during one of the interviews.

During the third day of the admissions round, we also interviewed sixteen candidates who had been interviewed at other colleges earlier in the process.

In general, the quality of the applicants was very high, and most of these that we interviewed performed well in those interviews. Of the candidates we interviewed on the first two days, eight received offers of places at Keble, and one more received a reserve offer from another college. All these candidates distinguished themselves by very good performances in both interviews at Keble, and excelled in at least one interview. Of the candidates interviewed on the third day of the process, we made 1 additional 'Open' offer underwritten by Keble, and we made two additional Open offers to candidates that had very good interviews at two other colleges but had not been interviewed at Keble. All offers were for 2020 entry.

In making decisions on offers we took account of all the information available to us, including the UCAS application form and performance in interviews.

There are some items of general feedback on the interviews themselves:

- We aim to establish how effectively each candidate processes information that is new to them. While we are greatly impressed by the level of general knowledge and factual recall of almost all our interviewees, we feel that their response to new material offers the best way to establish the candidates who will benefit most from a system that relies greatly on individual curiosity and application to problem-solving. Those considering preparations for interview might do well to spend time addressing new topics, and learning to articulate their thoughts about conceptual material. It tends to be obvious when candidates have existing experience of answering a question: under such circumstances, our practice is to ask a different question.
- The key is to be concise and articulate in your responses to questions, since the time-limit on the interview process is the same for all candidates. Our judgement is based in part on how far we can get in the time available.
- Don't be afraid to think aloud in the interview. It does no harm to back-track if you realise that you've got an idea wrong, but we can only do so during the course of the interview itself.
- We have noted over the last few years that some candidates excel at numerical aspects of their interviews, while others favour questions involving a more conceptual approach to chemistry. While it is fine (and probably inevitable) for people to favour one type of question over the other, it is essential for successful candidates to be able to address themselves to both parts of the process, and important to realise that both aspects are unavoidable parts of the undergraduate curriculum in Oxford.
- All candidates are asked at least one question about chemistry-related material in their personal statement. This is partly to put the candidate at ease on a familiar topic, but also to explore their understanding of an area in which they have expressed an interest. We cannot over-emphasise how it creates the wrong impression when a candidate seems unfamiliar with the material in their own personal statement, or with the central concept of a book that they claim to have read.