

# 2021 Admissions Round Feedback

## Geography

**Please note this is subject admissions feedback from the 2021 selection round - there will be changes each year, and these pages are only retained to provide a general indication of process.**

A wholehearted thank you to all those candidates who either applied for or were interviewed for Geography at Keble College in the 2021 round. We also greatly appreciate the efforts of school staff in preparing the reports on the UCAS forms and in supporting students to apply to Oxford, especially under such challenging circumstances this academic year. For the 2021 admissions round, we were able to make 8 offers (all for 2022).

There were just over 330 applicants to the University to read Geography; around 240 of them were shortlisted for interview and 85 offers were made, including one for deferred entry. In Keble, there were 27 first-choice applicants this year (all for 2022), 21 of whom were shortlisted. Following reallocation, Keble tutors interviewed 30 applicants.

The selection for shortlisting is carried out by the School of Geography and Environment using agreed criteria. The aim is to ensure that there are approximately three applicants interviewed for every place available. This year the criteria were:

- Contextualised (bGCSE) scores (bGCSEs calculate how a candidate performed at GCSE within the context of their own school by considering the relative ranking of the candidate in each of the subjects that they took at their school).
- Overall TSA score
- Information given in the UCAS form

In order to ensure that college choice does not have a disproportionate impact on the chances of being made an offer, the School of Geography and the Environment has a system of reallocating applicants between colleges. After shortlisting, each college reserves some of its first choice applicants and then all others are redistributed between colleges such that there are roughly three applicants per place in each of them.

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

This year tutors were also aware of the potential and uneven impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on both learning and assessment.

Candidates invited for interview at Keble were assessed on the basis of two independent 25-minute interviews with Geography fellows and tutors. All interviews took place online via the Microsoft Teams platform. During the interviews, interviewers asked a range of questions designed to test the candidate's ability in problem solving, ability to follow and evaluate an argument and independent thinking. Interviewers also presented the candidates with graphs, pictures and diagrams, to evaluate the applicants' ability to interpret data. In one of the interviews, candidates were given an article to read 30 minutes before the start of the interview and the article was discussed for 15 minutes in the interview. Interviewers also presented the candidates with graphs, pictures and diagrams, to evaluate the applicants' ability to interpret data. We do not test directly for geographical knowledge, but we expect candidates to be able to engage with geographical topics.

The strongest candidates were able to respond in a thoughtful way to questions and ideas, creatively applying pre-existing knowledge to new problems. They were able to relay the argument and content of the article they read prior to the interview accurately and to consider the merits of the argument. They responded precisely and clearly to graphs, maps, pictures and diagrams, seeking clarification from interviewers when necessary, and showing good attention to detail. Strong applicants also came across as engaged and enthused by the topics they were discussing, and demonstrated a broad awareness of, and engagement with topical issues. Above all, the better interviewees responded to what was asked of them rather than trying to inject prepared statements or facts into the discussion, or rely too heavily on previous knowledge. In general there are no strictly right and wrong answers to the questions we pose. We are much more interested in the ability of candidates to justify their reasons for the responses they give. The tutors do their best to be as fair, rigorous and consistent as possible in the identification of candidates with the potential and ability to flourish at the University.

We very much regret that we are unable to offer places to more candidates as so very many of them are deserving of a place. Thank you once again to all candidates for applying and to teaching staff for their very helpful contributions to the process.