



2025 Admissions Round Feedback

Geography

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.

Thank You!

A wholehearted thank you to all those candidates who either applied for or were interviewed for Geography at Keble College in the 2025 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. For the 2025 admissions round, we were able to make 10 offers for 2026 (one more than initially planned because of the strength of applications this year).

Online Demonstration Interview

Keble Geography contributed a demonstration interview to the university admissions resources. The online interview can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ncMXUMxdBc>

Dr Sam Hampton and Richard Washington, both on the teaching staff in Keble Geography, ran the interview with one of the current students. Sam and Richard have interviewed together for Keble for the last few years. The interview was filmed as a single take with no rehearsal and no editing. What you see in the video is as close to the real thing as could be. It is hopefully a useful resource for aspiring applicants. Sam and Richard were one of three panels doing the interviews in this round.

2025 Admissions Process

Applications

A total of 393 candidates applied to all colleges offering Geography at Oxford in the 2025 round. There were 379 in 2024, 289 in 2023, 333 in 2022, 333 in 2021, 455 in 2020, 447 in 2019 and 538 in 2018. In the 2025 round, Geography had 79 places on offer spread across 14 colleges taking Geography. Keble was one of three colleges offering 8 places. The next highest number of places on offer in any particular college was 6. Keble is therefore one of the three 'large' Geography colleges.

The gender profile of the applicants and the applicants to whom offers were made, along with the origin of the applicants (UK or non-UK) is shown below. There was no admissions test in operation this year.

	Man	Woman	Prefers not to say/Uses another term	UK	Non-UK	Total
Applicants	159	229	5	293	100	393
Shortlisted applicants	99	140	4	207	36	243
Applicants made offers	40	56	3	90	9	99

Shortlisting Process and Allocation of applicants to college for interview

Colleges are only allowed to interview 3 candidates for every place they offer. A process is run centrally by a panel in the department (i.e. School of Geography and Environment) to produce the list of candidates for interview. In the case of Keble, the final number we interviewed was 24 (3 times the number of candidates available for the 8 places).

The panel in the department (which did not include a Keble representative) was in receipt of the database of all candidates. A 'first-cut' was made which selected **All** Composite bands of disadvantage Band A applicants predicted to get at least AAA **AND** applicants with a cGCSE score of ≥ 0 . This cut-off was chosen to limit the initial shortlist to around 70% of the final interview places. Note that the cGCSE (contextualised GCSE) score was used by the department not an absolute GCSE score. The contextualised GCSE score provides information about how well an applicant has performed at GCSE compared to other applicants, given the performance of the school at which they took their GCSEs. Since the cGCSE score is not available for some schools (notably overseas and independent schools or any candidate not taking GCSE exams), colleges were then asked to nominate further candidates that should be retained for interview among the colleges. Since the strength of the applicants is unlikely to be even across colleges, any individual college could nominate more candidates than the total number they are allowed to interview (i.e. it was not limited to $3 \times 8 = 24$ for Keble). Keble had a strong set of applicants and duly nominated many students for interview to the department. Based on this new set of applicants, the department admissions panel came up with the following list of criteria for inclusion in interview at any college:

Band B, $\geq 6 \times 9/8/A^*$ GCSEs, ≥ -0.2 cGCSE score

or

$9 \times 9/8/A^*$ GCSEs

or

$8 \times 9/8/A^*$ GCSEs, ≥ -0.4 cGCSE score

Candidates fitting these new criteria listed above as well as the initial criteria (Band A predicted AAA and cGCSE score > 0) produced a set of candidates which matched the number required for interview (i.e. 79 places $\times 3$). It is likely that the conditions listed above were arrived at iteratively.

Note, however, that this meant that candidates without cGCSE scores (e.g. many from Independent Schools) who had received fewer than nine GCSEs at the standard of A^* or grade 9 or grade 8, were no longer on the list of candidates retained for interview at any college.

Finally, from the list of candidates still available to Keble, we were able to select 16 for interview at Keble. The rest of the candidates who qualified given the criteria listed above, were allocated to

other colleges. Several of these candidates allocated to other colleges ended up being offered places. Keble also received 8 candidates from other colleges to make up the total number to be interviewed at Keble ($8 \times 3 = 24$). In the end we offered 10 places from 24 candidates we interviewed.

Keble Interviews

Candidates invited for interview at Keble were assessed on the basis of two independent 30-minute interviews with Geography fellows and tutors. All interviews took place online via the Microsoft Teams platform following the agreement across Oxford colleges to adopt online interviews for the foreseeable future. During the interviews, candidates were 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. We do not test directly for geographical knowledge, but we expect candidates to be able to engage with geographical topics. The academic staff conducting the interviews in 2025 were Richard Washington and Dr Sam Hampton (panel 1), Prof Beth Greenhough and Dr Eleanor Thomson (panel 2) and Dr Fiona Ferbrache and Alex Henry (panel 3). Alex is a DPhil student at Keble. All the others are on the Keble Geography teaching staff. Alex, Sam and Eleanor were once Geography undergraduates in Keble. Panels 1 and 2 used a short reading which was supplied to the candidates 30 minutes before the interview. The first part of the interview (usually 10 to 15 minutes) dealt with the reading. The readings were from *National Geographic* (Could Pablo Escobar's escaped hippos help the environment?), *The Conversation* (<https://theconversation.com/ai-is-bad-for-the-environment-and-the-problem-is-bigger-than-energy-consumption-247842> and <https://theconversation.com/what-climate-tipping-points-are-and-how-they-could-suddenly-change-our-planet-49405>) and the *Economist* (Climate change is a by-product of progress, not an existential crisis, says Trump's energy czar). Questions on the readings dealt with the content and interpretation of the content. Every candidate interviewed by Keble was questioned on one of the readings. No candidate faced readings in each of their two interviews.

The strongest candidates showed that they had absorbed the content of the article given to them and were able to respond in a thoughtful way to questions and ideas, with some creatively applying pre-existing knowledge to new problems. Strong candidates 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. The better interviewees responded to what was asked of them rather than trying to inject prepared statements and previous knowledge. It did not count against candidates who changed their minds about something in the course of the questioning, as long as they could put across the reasons for their thinking. In general, we were looking for clear thinkers who could justify their reasoning well.

Each panel scored individual applicants out of 10 and careful notes were made about the performance of each candidate. Post interviews, the panel of 6 met for several hours. Each candidate was discussed in detail. Discussion included the candidates' application form, exam grades and the interview itself. Decisions are never based on the interview alone. With each candidate doing two interviews, we ended up with two scores out of 10. In some cases, where a consensus

score within a panel was difficult to reach, the scores of the individual interviewers within the panel was recorded rather than averaged. There were often good reasons for within panel divergence and these cases were carefully discussed so that we could understand the reasons for score divergence. In any case, each and every candidate was discussed in detail by the panel members.

Keble College Geography tutors do their absolute best to be as fair, rigorous and as consistent as possible in the identification of candidates with the potential and ability to flourish at the University. Each panel member is required to undergo training before the interview process starts.

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. Similarly, we regret not being allowed to interview more than 24 candidates. Thank you once again to all candidates for applying and to teaching staff for their very helpful contributions to the process. The admissions process in 2026 is very likely to be similar and certainly, within Keble, the way we run the interviews will be the same.