

HUMAN SCIENCES ADMISSIONS SUMMARY REPORT 2023-24

(In this report numbers below 3 have been suppressed as such small numbers pose a risk to the privacy of individuals.)

1. ADMISSIONS STATISTICS

1.1 Number of applicants

There were 161 applicants. Of these 156 sat the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) test which is a compulsory part of the process.

1.2 Number of applicants per place

A total of 34 offers were made (including open offers), making a ratio of 4.7 applicants per place.

1.3 Breakdown of applicants by open applicants, deferred entry, gender and domicile

There were 25 open applicants.

There were 160 applicants for entry in 2024.

There were 26 male applicants (who identify as a man) and 131 female applicants (who identify as a woman) and 4 who used another term or preferred not to say.

1.4 Number of applicants shortlisted

95 applicants were shortlisted for interview.

1.5 Number of applicants offered places

34 applicants were offered places (including 2 applicants who were made open offers).

2. ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES

2.1 Shortlisting Procedures

2.1.1 Selection Criteria

The interview process and selection criteria for Human Sciences are set out on the Human Sciences website at <https://www.ihs.ox.ac.uk/apply-study-here>

2.1.2 Procedure for Shortlisting

Shortlisting was performed in accordance with the stated admissions criteria, available and relevant data, in particular these data included an applicant's score from the TSA, the candidate's contextualised GCSE score, all aspects of the applicant's UCAS form and any further information specific to the applicant.

The TSA score and contextualised GCSE score (where applicable) were combined to provide a pre-interview score on which candidates were ranked. A threshold based on the number of places available was calculated and those above the threshold in the ranking and whose predicted or obtained A levels or equivalent grades met the requirement for the course (and who had satisfactory previous qualifications) were shortlisted. A number of candidates below the threshold who had exceptional circumstances were also short-listed, resulting in around 3 short-listed applicants per place.

A meeting of tutors from all colleges offering places for Human Sciences was held to discuss short-listing decisions in the light of all information available to ensure that short-listing decisions were applied consistently across all colleges. At this meeting short-listing decisions for candidates were agreed and these decisions were entered onto the web-based admissions database.

Each applicant had a first assigned college, which was either the college to which they applied or, in the case of open applicants, a college randomly selected by the Admissions Office in such a way as to even out competition for places. In cases where a college was particularly over-subscribed, the college was invited to reallocate some of its candidates after short-listing. These candidates were then assigned to the colleges where were under-subscribed. In 2023-24, thirteen applicants were reallocated to a different first-choice college.

2.1.3 Weighting of TSA and Contextualised GCSE scores

For candidates with a contextualised GCSE score, the TSA score and contextualised GCSE score were given equal weight in the pre-interview score. For candidates without a contextualised GCSE score, the Pre-interview score was based solely on the TSA score.

2.1.4 Statistics on short-listed candidates

The average number of GCSEs amongst short-listed candidates was 9.8 (compared with 9.7 in 2022-23 and 9.6 in 2021-2) and the average number of GCSEs at 9/8/A* amongst shortlisted candidates was 8.8 (compared with 8.6 in 2022-23 and 2021-22). Amongst all candidates, the average number of GCSEs was 9.45 (compared with 9.5 in 2022-23 and 9.6 in 2021-22) and the average number of GCSEs at 9/8/A* was 7.6 (compared with 8 in 2022-23 and 7.8 in 2021-22).

Of the 95 shortlisted candidates, 67 were taking (or had taken) A-levels (compared with 57 out of 92 in 2022-23) and of these 59 (or 88.1%) were taking (or had taken) Biology (compared with 48 or 84.2% in 2022-23 or 70 or 92.1 in 2021-22).

2.2 Interview Process

2.2.1 Description of Interview Process

All short-listed candidates were interviewed in early December. The interview dates by subject are readily available on the Admissions Office webpage in advance.

All interviews took place remotely on Microsoft Teams.

2.2.2 Number of Interviews at 1st Colleges

There were 95 first college interviews.

2.2.3 Number of 2nd College interviews including second college allocation process

There were 95 interviews at 2nd colleges. Each short-listed candidate was randomly assigned a second college by an algorithm so as to equalise across colleges the interview load per place ratio.

2.2.4 Descriptors of Interviews Scoring used

Interviews are academic in nature. An applicant's performance was judged according to the admissions criteria. The interviews were graded on a scale of 1–20 against agreed descriptors as follows:

20	Truly exceptional A candidate such as only rarely encountered	(A++)	78+
19	Outstanding Unambiguously first class	(A+)	72-77
17-18	Excellent Clear suggestions of first class potential: highly competent in response to tests; highly articulate; relevant knowledge going beyond what one might expect; thoughtful and insightful in discussion, taking the conversation further than the norm	(A)	68-72
14-16	Very good Clearly capable of gaining a 2.1 degree: competent in response to tests; articulate; sound relevant knowledge; enthusiastic about Human Sciences	(AB)	63-67
12-13	Competent Competent overall, but some suggestion of weakness: some inaccuracies or difficulty in response to tests or in discussion of relevant issues; gaps in relevant knowledge; some lack of enthusiasm for the subject	(B)	58-62
10-11	Borderline acceptance Signs of potential, but also clear signs of weakness: inaccuracies or difficulty in response to tests or in discussion of relevant issues; not as articulate as tutorial discussion generally requires; gaps in relevant knowledge; lack of enthusiasm for the subject	(BC)	54-57
8-9	Weak Too weak to consider for a place: failures in the tests; failure to sustain a discussion; worrying gaps in relevant knowledge; lack of enthusiasm for the subject	(C)	48-53
4-7	Very weak As above, but to a greater degree		21-47
0-3	Exceptionally weak Failure to navigate the tests and sustain a discussion; unacceptable gaps in basic knowledge; unenthusiastic		0-20

2.2.5 Procedures for Final Decision Making including Final Admissions Meeting

The Institute of Human Sciences operates various procedures in a co-ordinated effort to ensure that the strongest applicants are offered places irrespective of college choice. These include transparency of all test results, interview grades and UCAS forms amongst all tutors involved in admissions, and a meeting of tutors at which places awarded are collectively agreed. At this meeting the strongest unplaced candidates were discussed and seven were selected for a panel interview.

A panel comprising the admissions co-ordinator and two other college lead interviewers for Human Sciences interviewed these candidates and two were made open offers.

3. Pre-Interview Admissions Test: The Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) Test

3.1 When and how the test results are available

The TSA results are automatically distributed to all applicants shortly after decision letters are sent in January.

3.2 The average performance of Candidates

The average TSA score in 2023 was:

56.7 amongst all applicants (compared with 61.0 in 2022 and 64.0 in 2021)

60.3 amongst shortlisted applicants (compared with 65.9 in 2022 and 68.6 in 2021)

61.5 amongst applicants who were made offers (compared with 73.9 in 2022 and 68.9 in 2021)

For the problem solving questions the average score was:

55.7 amongst all applicants (compared with 57.0 in 2022 and 63.6 in 2021)

59.6 amongst shortlisted applicants (compared with 62.3 in 2022 and 67.9 in 2021)

59.9 amongst applicants who were made offers (compared with 68.9 in 2022 and 70.2 in 2021)

For the critical thinking questions, the average score was:

57.9 amongst all applicants (compared with 65.1 in 2022 and 64.7 in 2021)

61.6 amongst shortlisted applicants (compared with 70.3 in 2022 and 70.0 in 2021)

64.1 amongst applicants who were made offers (compared with 73.7 in 2022 and 73.5 in 2021)

Distribution of TSA Scores

