

Preparing students for interviews and admissions tests



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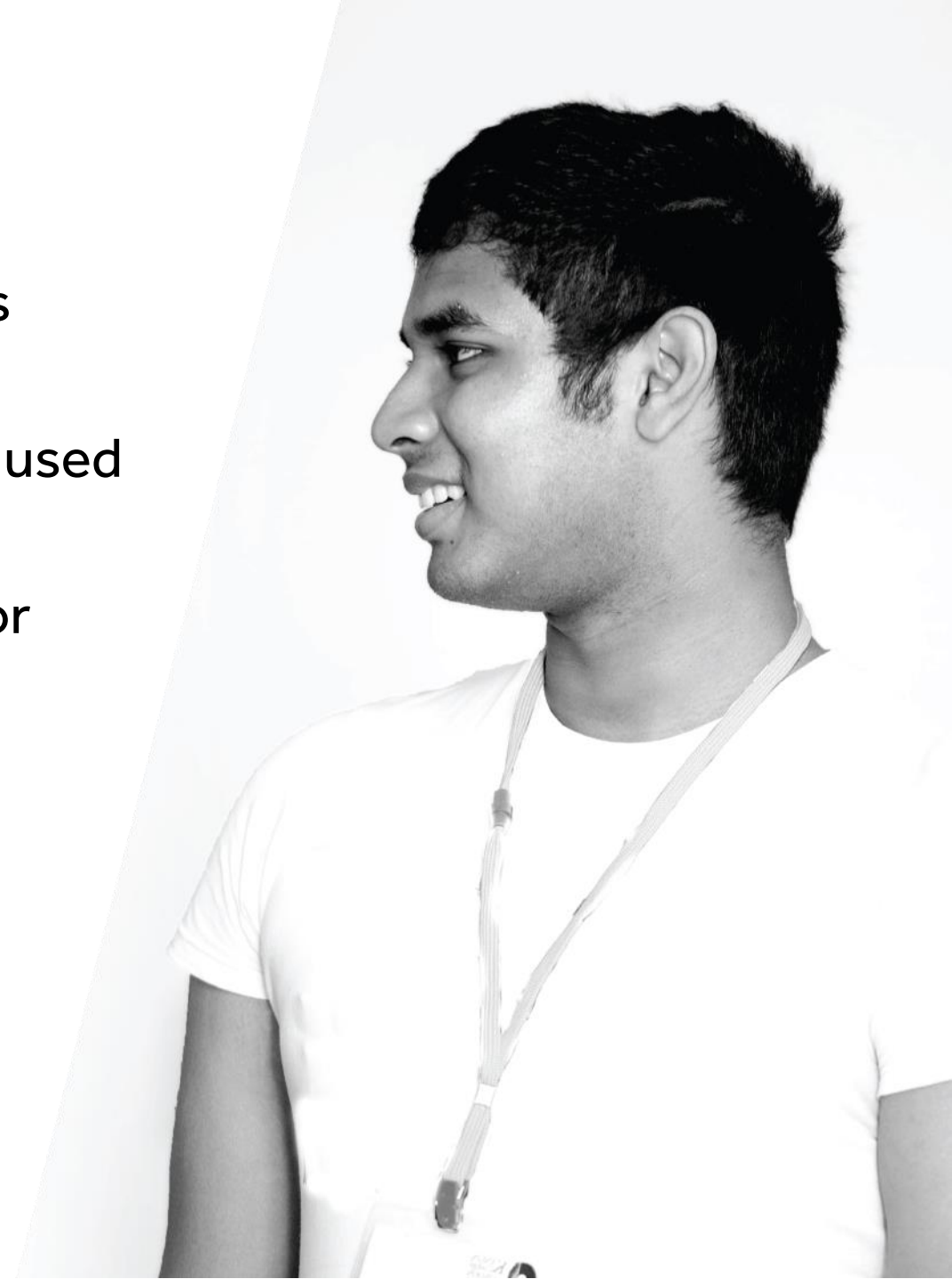


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University of Sheffield / University of Southampton / University College
London University of Warwick / University of York

Coming up...

By the end of this session you will have:

- A deeper understanding of the use of admissions tests and interviews
- Identified different types of tests and interviews used by Russell Group universities
- Considered how to help your students prepare for admissions tests and interviews.





Admissions tests

Admissions tests

Many Russell Group universities use admissions tests to inform the decision-making process. They can be used in different ways:

- To inform whether an offer should be made
- To decide whether to invite a student to interview
- Following an interview, to decide between two equally ranked applicants.

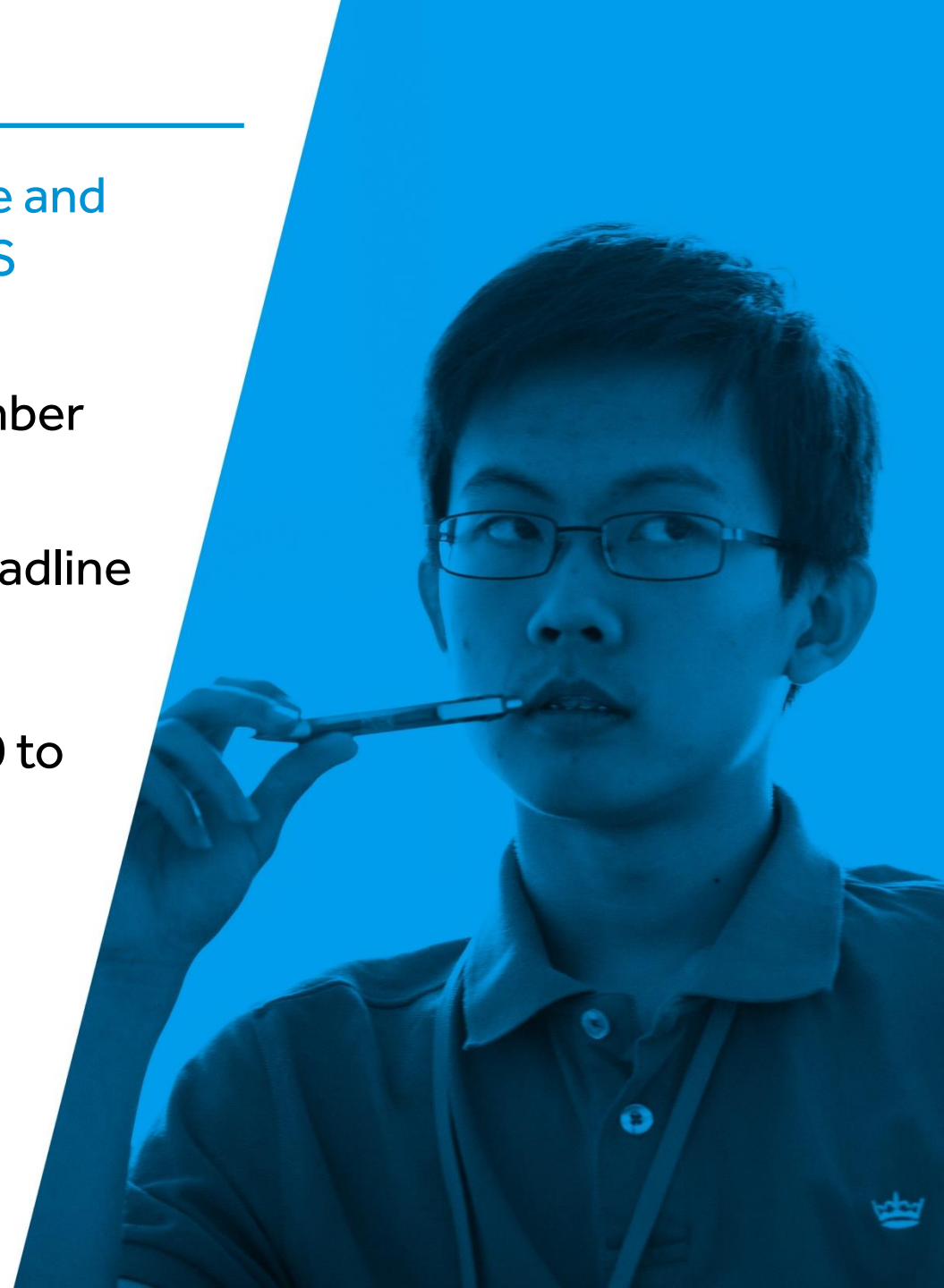
The good news is that most university applicants do not have to take any kind of additional admissions tests. However for courses where a test is required, applicants need to plan ahead to avoid ruling themselves out.



The logistics

Students need to check the registration deadlines, where and when they will sit the test and the deadline for their UCAS application.

- Tests generally take place between August and November the year before starting the course
- Some tests take place before the UCAS application deadline
- Test locations vary depending on the type of test
- Some tests have a cost associated (approximately £50 to £100) but bursaries may be available.



Commonly used tests

BMAT (Biomedical Admissions Test)

- Required for certain Medicine, Vet Med, Biomedical Science and Dentistry courses
- Register in early autumn and the test is typically in October or November

LNAT (Law National Aptitude Test)

- For applicants to Law
- Online test in two parts
- Can register from August – Oxbridge applicants must take the test by 15th October

MAT (Mathematics Admissions Test)

- Used to test mathematical ability
- Commonly used by the University of Oxford (for maths and computer science) and Imperial College London (for maths).



Commonly used tests

STEP (Sixth Term Examination Paper)

- Mathematics
- Consists of up to three paper-based examinations
- Takes place during June during the summer exam season.

Thinking Skills Assessment

- Used to identify critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Three different tests used by the universities of Cambridge and Oxford and University College London.

UCAT (University Clinical Aptitude Test)

- The most commonly used test for Medicine and Dentistry courses
- Assesses verbal reasoning, decision-making, quantitative reasoning, abstract reasoning and situational judgement
- Testing runs from July – October, and students can book up to 90 days in advance.



Practice papers



The aim of this activity is for you to develop an understanding of the styles of questions used in a range of admissions tests.

Individually or in pairs, look at the example questions.

Don't focus too much on working out the correct answers, just think about how you might help your students to prepare for answering questions like these.

 10 minutes



How to prepare

Students should practise as much as possible.
Practice tests and answers are available on test websites.

Encourage students to complete the practice papers under examination conditions. Timing is important.

Students should read the guidance for candidates. This will help them understand the structure of the test and how it is used by universities.

Check the deadlines as some are very early in the year. Some courses may not accept a student if they have not taken the test.

Encourage groups of students undertaking the same tests to form study groups to support each other.





Interviews

Interviews

Russell Group universities may use interviews to help them decide which candidates should receive offers. Universities may:

- Interview for all courses (e.g. Oxford and Cambridge)
- Have two interviews, one for the course and another for the college/university
- Interview for specific courses only
- Use interviews for information gathering
- Use interviews as an opportunity for the applicant.

Many universities provide (free) accommodation for applicants during the interview process.



Types of interview

There are different types of interview and the structure can differ depending on the university or course. Example types:

Individual interviews

- Panel or one-to-one
- Traditional method
- Opportunity to ask questions
- Could be very subject-specific or more general
- Academic discussion rather than traditional questions (Oxford and Cambridge)

Group interviews

- Q&A session
- Task or scenario
- Contributions from each candidate



MMI interview

Multiple mini-interviews may be used by professional courses such as Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science and Nursing.

- Typically consists of six to ten different stations
- No more than 10 minutes each
- Assess qualities required for that course and profession
- Example stations include:
 - traditional interview question
 - working through a scenario
 - written exercise
 - interacting with an actor
 - data interpretation
 - ethical reasoning



Sample MMI questions and scenarios



1. You're a medical student and see a patient who you recognise from your GP placement in a supermarket car park, getting into a car. You remember the GP telling the patient that he is unable to drive due to his uncontrolled epilepsy. Discuss the relevant ethical issues with the examiner.
2. Without using your hands, explain how to tie shoe-laces.
3. Discuss one of your hobbies outside of school and how the skills you gained from this activity will help you in your career.
4. What personal qualities do you think are not required for a Nurse?
5. Role play: You are on your way home from a lecture and you reach a bus stop. A student from your course is sat at the bus stop looking very upset. You don't know their name and you haven't spoken to them before. Demonstrate how you would approach this situation.

How to prepare

There are some things that your students can do before an interview that will make them feel more confident.

- Think about how they might answer possible questions
 - For academic discussions – practise speaking out loud when completing homework
- Practise answering questions with friends, family and teachers
 - Be careful not to over-rehearse - interviewers will not want to hear scripted answers
- Read around the subject
 - Reread their personal statement
 - Think about relevant topics that particularly interest them



STAR technique

Situation: In answer to the questions, students should begin by very briefly presenting a recent challenge or situation in which they found themselves.

Task: Students should briefly explain the task and what they set out to achieve.

Action: What did the student do? The interviewer will be looking to find out what action the student took, why and what the alternatives were.

Results: What was the outcome of the student's actions? What was achieved through the actions taken and did they meet the objectives? What was learned from this experience and has this learning been used since?



Top tips for interviews


- Students need to try and be as **relaxed** as possible so they can **be themselves**. They should **be confident** in their knowledge and abilities.
- Encourage students to look at **universities' websites** – they often have interview tips and advice pages
- Ask students to **research** the course and the university beforehand
- Help students to **prepare responses** to standard questions such as 'why do you want to study this subject?'
- Encourage your students to **think about their body language** in the interview
- Students can wear **casual clothing** to Oxbridge interviews if they prefer this
- Set up **mock interviews** at your school or college
- Make sure students know where the interview is and **how to get there**
- Encourage students to **think of some questions** to ask the interviewer(s) before the interview



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Frequently used tests

Universities	Tests				
	BMAT	LNAT	STEP	TSA	UKCAT
University of Birmingham					✓
University of Bristol		✓	*		✓
University of Cambridge	✓		✓	✓	
Cardiff University					✓
Durham University		✓			✓
University of Edinburgh					✓
University of Exeter					✓
University of Glasgow		✓			✓
Imperial College London	✓		*		
King's College London		✓	*		✓
University of Leeds	✓				
University of Liverpool					✓
London School of Economics and Political Science					
University of Manchester					✓
Newcastle University					✓
University of Nottingham		✓	*		✓
University of Oxford	✓	✓		✓	
Queen Mary University of London					✓
Queen's University Belfast					✓
University of Sheffield					✓
University of Southampton					
University College London	✓				
University of Warwick					
University of York					

* May take results into account, for example STEP is used in different ways, see [section four](#) in [the 'to university?' guidebook](#). 

Preparing for interview

Possible questions

Your students are likely to be asked questions that:

- are related to the course they have applied for
- ask them to expand on information in their application form.

Encourage your students to think about questions that might be asked and how they would answer them. The questions could include:

- Why do you want to study at this university?
- Why have you chosen this subject/course?
- What are your areas of interest in this subject?

Practise the interview

Encourage your students to practise answering questions about their subject and wider interests with their friends, family and teachers. You may wish to ask your colleagues to give your students a practice interview so they can gain experience of expressing their ideas and opinions to someone who does not know them so well.

However, interviewers will not want to hear prepared answers. Over-rehearsed answers can be counterproductive if the student is preoccupied with recalling set speeches on general topics rather than listening to the interviewers' questions and responding accordingly.

Why use admissions assessments?

- To differentiate between well-qualified candidates
- To give us a common set of data with which to compare applicants to a specific course
- To stretch and challenge applicants
- To assess the aptitude and potential of candidates
- To help to select for places at interview and/or for places on courses
- If appropriate, to assess subject knowledge and understanding



is applied to study.
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have read.
ok. **Helping your**



Further information

- **Admissions Testing Service:** <http://www.admissionstesting.org/>
- **LNAT:** <https://lnat.ac.uk/>
- **MAT:** <http://www.admissionstesting.org/for-test-takers/mat/about-mat/>
- **STEP:** <http://www.admissionstesting.org/for-test-takers/step/about-step/>
- **UCAT:** <https://www.ucat.ac.uk/>
- **The Uni Guide interview preparation tips:** <https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/ucas-application/university-interviews-how-to-prepare>
- **UCAS information page about admissions tests:** <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/admissions-tests>
- **UCAS advice on interviews:** <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/after-you-apply/undergraduate-interview-invitations>
- **Advancing Access:** www.advancingaccess.ac.uk

Questions?

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