Physics Feedback 2016-17

Across the University there were 1351 applicants for Physics and Physics & Philosophy. The estimated competition for places was 6.7 applicants per place.

506 applicants were shortlisted for interview. The primary shortlisting criterion used by the tutors was performance on the Physics Aptitude Test. Information provided on the UCAS form, including all relevant contextual information, was also used in the shortlisting process. Candidates whose PAT score was thought not to reflect their true abilities were also considered for shortlisting. Candidates whose test results and UCAS form did not show strong academic promise were not called for interview, as we consider that an interview is unlikely to compensate for weaknesses elsewhere in their application.

The Physics Aptitude Test is a two-hour long test of maths and physics. The total mark achieved on the combined test ranged from 4 to 100, with a mean mark of 53.0 and a standard deviation of 15.3. All applicants scoring 60 and above were shortlisted. Roughly 65 applicants below this cut-off whose application forms showed other evidence of excellence or had been ill during the test were added. Candidates may request their test scores from the College. A report on the PAT 2016 will be added to the Physics website (http://www2.physics.ox.ac.uk/study-here/undergraduates/applications/physics-aptitude-test-pat).

All shortlisted candidates who attended interview at Mansfield received two interviews at the College and a further interview at another college. The following criteria were used to assess performance during the interviews: motivation; ability to express physical ideas using mathematics and mathematical ability; reasoning ability - ability to analyse and solve problems using logical and critical approaches; physics intuition – ability to see how one part of a physical system connects with others, and to predict what will happen in a given physical situation; communication – ability to give precise explanations both orally and numerically.

Candidates were then assessed on the basis of their PAT scores, interview results, and the information on the UCAS form, including contextual information, and compared centrally against all candidates applying to Oxford Physics. Across the University, 209 offers were made for Physics. This year Mansfield offered 7 places for Physics.

The selection criteria for Physics are published on the web at: http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/selection-criteria.