PPE Admissions Feedback 2021-22

Summary

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Mansfield made nine offers for 2021 entry.

Shortlisting

Candidates were shortlisted using their UCAS applications and their scores on the Thinking Skills Assessment. 708 applicants were shortlisted, which was approximately 2.8 candidates per place.

Thinking Skills Assessment

All candidates were required to sit the Thinking Skills Assessment on 5 November 2020. The Thinking Skills Assessment is a single two-hour test consisting of two sections: the first section (90 minutes) contains multiple choice questions which test problem-solving skills such as numerical and spatial reasoning, and critical thinking; in the second section (30 minutes) candidates are asked to choose one essay question from a choice of four and write a response. More information about the test can be found here.

The mean Section 1 (multiple choice) score for all PPE applicants (excluding those who did not sit the test) was 70.7. For shortlisted applicants the mean was 77.6, and 80.2 for those who receive an offer. The distribution of marks was as follows:

![Distribution of Section 1 Scores](image)

Note: graph excludes candidates who did not sit Section 1 (n=127).
When marking Section 2 (essay), tutors looked for evidence of whether the candidate had addressed the question in the way demanded; organised their thoughts clearly; used clear, concise, compelling and correct English; used general knowledge and opinions appropriately. Essays in the top range of marks had clear construction, an interesting and effective argument, and excellent use of English. Weaker answers failed to address the question appropriately, or had significant weaknesses in argument, structure or use of English.

The mean Section 2 (essay) score for all PPE applicants (excluding those who did not sit the test) was 63.5. For shortlisted applicants the mean was 66.3, and 67.0 for those who received an offer. The distribution of marks was as follows:

UCAS Application
Candidates were assessed on the basis of their past and predicted examination results, their personal statement, their teacher’s reference and any relevant contextual information. Each candidate’s individual circumstances were considered when assessing their application. The stronger candidates were those who had high predicted or achieved grades (A*/9/8s at GCSE or equivalent, A*s or As at A Level or equivalent), and a reference recommending them as outstanding among their peers. In assessing the personal statement, tutors looked for evidence of interest in PPE but not necessarily knowledge of the three subjects. Candidates were not expected to have studied any of the three subjects at school, but were expected to show engagement with at least one or two of the three (e.g. extra-curricular reading).

Contextualised GCSE score
All candidates who had sat GCSEs were also given a contextualised GCSE score. The contextualised GCSE score provides information on how well an applicant performed at GCSE compared to other applicants to Oxford, given the performance of the school at which they sat their GCSEs.

Candidates were shortlisted on the basis of their TSA Section 1 and Section 2 scores, GCSE or equivalent grades (including contextualised GCSE score where applicable), predicted or actual performance at A Level or equivalent, teacher’s reference and personal statement. The TSA scores and GCSE/A Level (or equivalent grades) were given highest weighting, the teacher’s reference medium weighting, and the personal statement lower weighting.

Candidates with strong TSA scores, cGCSE scores (where available) and UCAS applications were likely to be shortlisted for interview. Those with weaker TSA scores and/or UCAS
applications were only shortlisted if mitigating circumstances or contextual information suggested that their scores might not be an accurate reflection of their potential.

A number of candidates were reallocated to a different college at this point, to ensure that the ratio of shortlisted applicants per place was approximately the same at each college.

**Interview**

All shortlisted candidates were asked to attend an interview online of around 45 minutes with the Mansfield tutors. Candidates were asked questions relating to Philosophy, Politics and Economics, though no prior knowledge of any of the subjects was assumed.

In the interviews tutors looked for evidence of: capacity for sustained study, motivation and interest, an independent and reflective approach to learning; ability to analyse and solve problems using logical and critical approaches, ability to assess relevance, capacity to construct and critically assess arguments, flexibility and willingness to consider alternative views; willingness and ability to express ideas clearly and effectively on paper and orally; ability to listen; ability to give considered responses. Candidates were not expected to have studied any philosophy, politics or economics before, but were expected to show critical and creative engagement with issues relevant to the study of those subjects.

A number of candidates were also interviewed at a second college. Approximately 40 additional interviews took place. These interviews were carried out as part of the movement of candidates from oversubscribed to undersubscribed colleges.

**Offers**

Offers were made to candidates who demonstrated the most potential to perform well on the course on the basis of their UCAS form, performance in the TSA multiple choice and essay, interview performance and any other relevant contextual information.

19.1% of candidates who were made offers received their offer from a college other than their first-choice college. Most candidates were made a conditional offer; for details of the standard offer please see [here](#).