Theology Admissions Feedback 2020-21

Summary

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Mansfield made five Theology and Religion offers for 2021 entry, including one open offer. Two offers were made for Philosophy and Theology for 2021 entry.

Shortlisting

Candidates were shortlisted using their UCAS applications and written work, and for Philosophy and Theology applicants, their scores on the Philosophy Test. 50 applicants were shortlisted for Theology and Religion, approximately 2.0 applicants per place. 75 applicants were shortlisted for Philosophy and Theology, approximately 2.0 applicants per place.

Written Work

All candidates were asked to submit a piece of work as part of the assessment, usually a marked essay written as part of their normal school or college work. Work was marked centrally on a scale of 0-100, using the following criteria: ability to think clearly and to reason coherently; evidence of independence of thought; ability to structure work and arguments in a logical way; ability to write clearly (and grammatically) with clear expression of thought.

The mean written work score for all Theology and Religion applicants was 63.2. The mean for shortlisted applicants was 64.4, and 65.9 for those who went on to receive an offer. The mean written work score for all Philosophy and Theology applicants was 64.0. The mean for shortlisted applicants was 64.7, and 65.7 for those who went on to receive an offer. The distribution of grades was as follows:

![Written work grade distribution chart]

1 Includes a number of candidates who applied for Philosophy and Theology but were shortlisted or made offers for Theology and Religion.
Philosophy Test
Candidates for Philosophy and Theology were required to sit the Philosophy Test on 4 November 2020. The Philosophy Test is a 60 minute test designed to assess a candidate's philosophical reasoning skills. The test ordinarily involves a comprehension exercise and a short essay or answer a structured question.

The mean Philosophy Test score for all applicants (excluding those who did not sit the test) was 63.0. The mean score for shortlisted applicants was 66.1, and 66.7 for those who went on to receive an offer. The distribution of marks was as follows:

Note: graph excludes candidates who did not sit the Philosophy Test (n=10).

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 taken into account when assessing their application.

Contextualised GCSE
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.

A ranking was calculated using the contextualised GCSE score, written work score and Philosophy Test score (where applicable). Scores and rankings were calculated separately for Theology and Religion and Philosophy and Theology. The ranking was then used to help shortlist candidates, with those who came higher in the ranking more likely to be shortlisted for interview, and those lower in the ranking less likely to be shortlisted unless mitigating circumstances or contextual information suggested that their scores might not be an accurate reflection of their potential.

Candidates were reviewed by a faculty admissions panel, and a final shortlist agreed. 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 30 minutes with Mansfield Theology tutors. The interviews centred on the candidates' written work, general reading and an unseen text. Candidates for Philosophy and Theology were also asked to attend a 20-25 minute with the Mansfield Philosophy tutors, where students were asked to
think critically about a question or puzzle relating to philosophy. No prior knowledge of philosophy was expected.

Applicants also had one or more interviews at a second college.

In the interviews tutors looked for evidence of: ability to understand complex concepts; ability to form sound arguments; ability to listen to and respond to counterarguments; openness to learning; ability at close textual reading and interpretation; dedication and diligence in work; independent thought and reading; ability to develop ideas presented in written work; oral communication skills.

**Offers**

Offers were made to candidates who demonstrated the most potential to perform well on the course on the basis of their UCAS form, submitted written work, performance in the Philosophy Test (where applicable), interview performance and any other relevant contextual information. The list of candidates to be made open offers was agreed at a meeting of Theology tutors from all colleges.

41.3% of Theology and Religion and Philosophy and Theology offer holders 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](#).