

Mansfield College

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Philosophy, Politics and Economics Admissions Feedback 2023-24

Summary

Applications	1770
Shortlisted	669
Offers for 2024 ¹	258 (includes 24 open offers)
Offers for 2025	8

Mansfield made eight offers for 2024 entry.

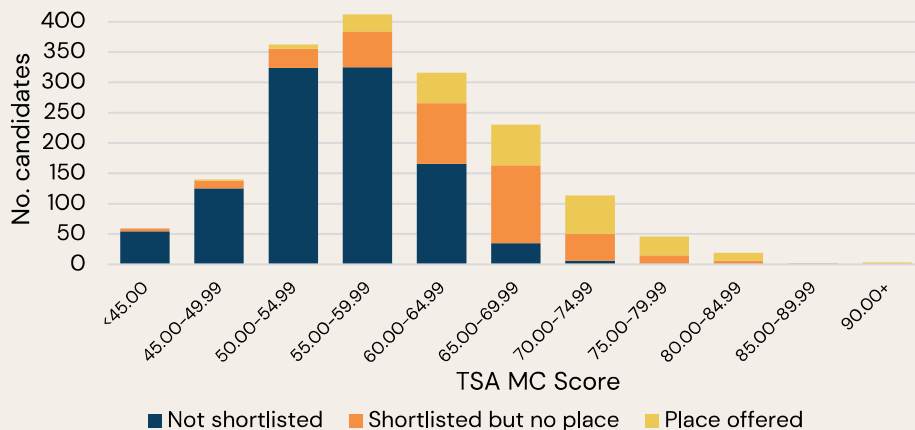
Shortlisting

Candidates were shortlisted using their UCAS applications, contextualised GCSE scores (where applicable) and their scores on the Thinking Skills Assessment. 669 applicants were shortlisted, which was approximately 2.6 candidates per place.

Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA)

As part of the application process, candidates were asked to sit the TSA in October 2023. The TSA is a two-hour test consisting of two sections: multiple choice questions on problem-solving, numerical and spatial reasoning, and critical thinking (90 minutes), and an essay on a general topic (30 minutes). More information about the test can be found on the [University website](#).

The distribution of marks was as follows:



Note: graph excludes candidates who did not sit Section 1 (n=67).

¹ A proportion of the offers for Law were made to applicants who had originally applied for Law with Law Studies in Europe. These applicants are represented in the figures for LSE at application and shortlisting stage, and in the figures for Law at offer stage.

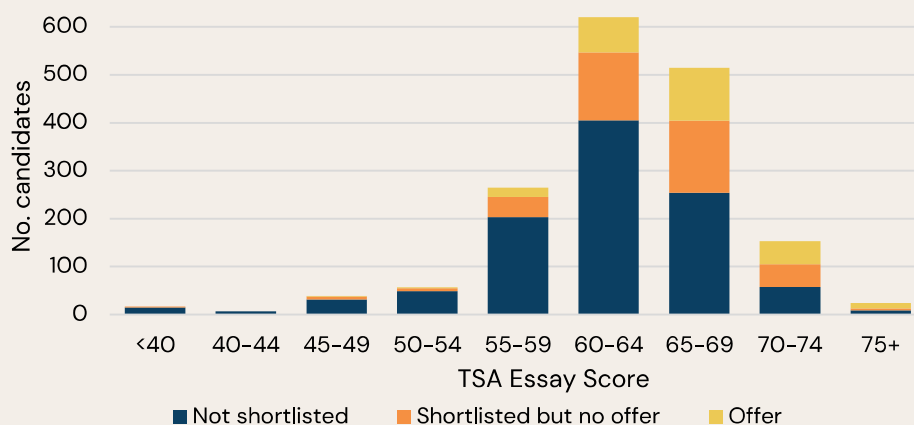
The mean Section 1 (multiple choice) score for all PPE applicants (excluding those who did not sit the test) was 59.3. For shortlisted applicants the mean was 65.6, and 68.5 for those who received an offer.

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 distribution of marks was as follows:



Note: graph excludes candidates who did not sit Section 2 (n=73).

The mean Section 2 (essay) score for all PPE applicants (excluding those who did not sit the test) was 62.7. For shortlisted applicants the mean was 64.8, and 65.8 for those who received an offer.

Contextualised GCSE score (UK applicants)

The contextualised GCSE score provides information on how well an applicant performed at GCSE, given the performance of the school at which they sat their GCSEs.

For candidates who did not do GCSEs, or for whom it was not possible to calculate a score, the TSA and UCAS application were given more weighting during the shortlisting process.

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, AAA+ 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).

Candidates were shortlisted on the basis of their TSA scores and their UCAS application, including relevant contextual information. The TSA scores and GCSE/A Level (or equivalent grades) were given highest weighting, the teacher's reference medium weighting, and the personal statement the lowest weighting.

Candidates with strong TSA scores 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.

Some 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 remote interviews. At Mansfield, each candidate had one longer interview of 45 minutes. 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.

Approximately 20–25 candidates were also interviewed at a second college. 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 application, performance in the TSA multiple choice and essay, interview performance and any other relevant contextual information.

16.5% 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 the [PPE course page](#).