University of Oxford

Computer Science
Mathematics and Computer Science
Computer Science and Philosophy

Summary of the admissions process 2019

The number of applications for each subject was as follows, with changes in comparison with the 2018 admissions round.

	Applications		Shortlisted		Places offered	
Computer Science	682	–1%	126	–11%	44	–17%
Mathematics & CS	505	+17%	118	+9%	49	+9%
CS & Philosophy	174	+17%	42	–5%	17	+13%
Total	**1,361**	**+7%**	**286**	–3%	**110**	**–3%**

Computer Science applications were stable this year following an exceptional increase last year, but applications in the two joint schools continued to grow. The relative numbers of places offered in Computer Science and in Mathematics and Computer Science returned to the normal pattern. Applications continue to outstrip the number of places, and as a result many very able candidates were not offered a place.

Shortlisting

In the light of the competition for places, the purpose of shortlisting is to identify those applicants who are most likely to succeed in the rest of the selection process, giving interviewers time to consider each shortlisted candidate carefully. The number of shortlisted candidates was therefore restricted to slightly less than three for each quota place.

Shortlisting was performed in accordance with the stated admissions criteria.[1] All applicants are expected to sit the Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT) prior to shortlisting, including questions designed to assess aptitude for Computer Science. Details of the test and several past papers and specimen papers with solutions can be found online.[2] Tutors are guided by a statistically validated score derived from the MAT and the number of A* grades achieved by those candidates taking GCSEs, and exercise discretion within thresholds determined for each degree subject by the subject coordinator. They take into account all information from the UCAS form and any relevant contextual information such as educational background. Shortlisting decisions are reviewed by the subject coordinator in order to ensure consistency between colleges.

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[1] https://www.cs.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/why_oxford/formal_admissions_criteria.html

[2] https://www.cs.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/how_to_apply/MAT_test.html

Interviews

All shortlisted candidates are invited to Oxford for interview in mid-December, on dates advertised by the University in advance. Each candidate is associated with a first college, either of their choosing, or selected for them in a way that aims to even out the competition for places across the colleges. Each candidate is also associated with a second college chosen randomly with the same aim.

During their time in Oxford, candidates are interviewed by both their first and second colleges, and may be invited to further interviews at other colleges. Applicants for joint degrees are typically given separate interviews in the two subjects.

Interviews are academic and subject-focussed in nature. The applicant's performance in each interview is judged according to the admissions criteria, codified on a numeric scale against agreed descriptors, and shared among all tutors involved in admissions, together with the candidates' UCAS forms and their test results.

For applicants from outside Europe who are unable to attend Oxford for interview, one or more interviews by teleconferencing are arranged, often in the week before the interviews for candidates attending in Oxford.

The colleges use various procedures in a coordinated effort to ensure that the strongest candidates are admitted across the University irrespective of the college considering their application. These include complete transparency of all information gained about each candidate, supported by an online information system, and a final meeting where the strongest unplaced candidates are identified and open offers are agreed. Typically around 30% of offers made come from a college other than the candidate's first college, or are open offers (meaning that the candidate is offered a place at Oxford at a college that will be determined in August).

Following the end of the selection process, colleges write to candidates via UCAS with the results of their application. Standard conditions apply to those taking A levels, the International Baccalaureate or Scottish Highers; for other applicants, tutors will seek advice from the subject coordinator or the college's admissions tutor in determining a comparable set of conditions.
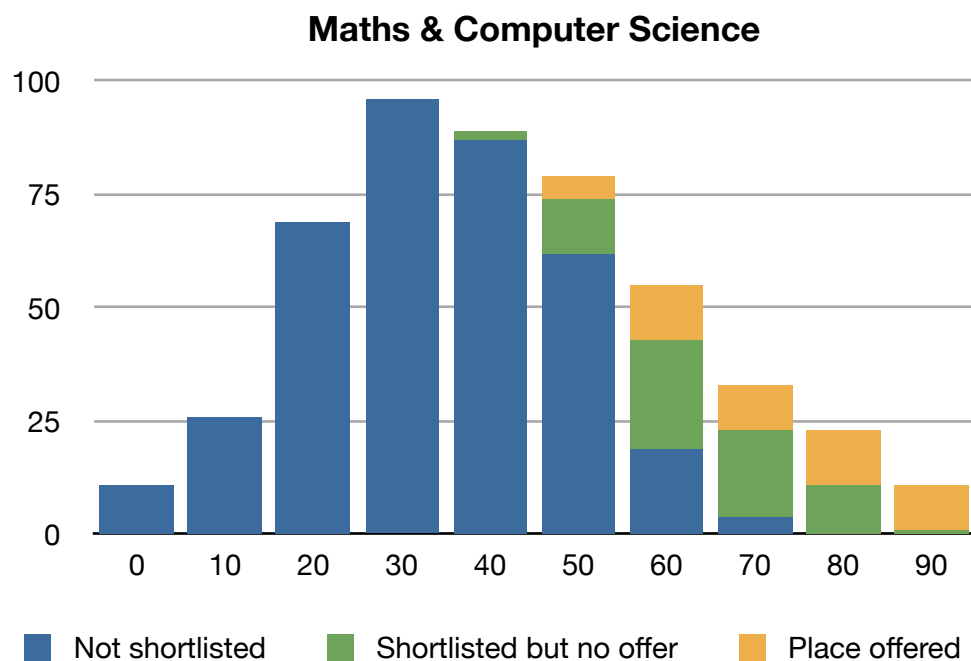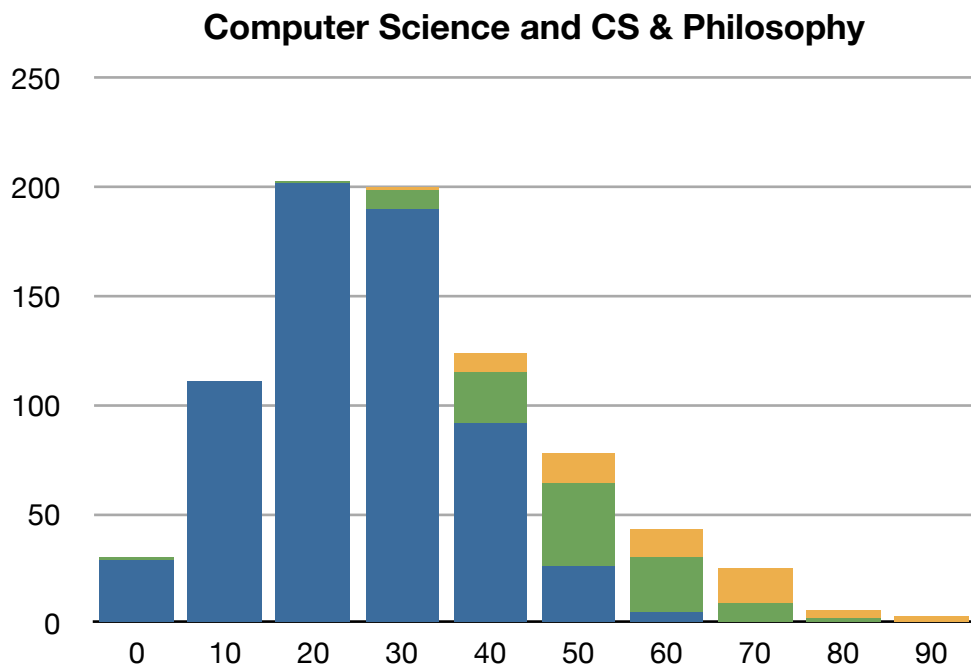
The attached graphs show admissions outcomes in comparison with MAT scores; the average mark differs according to the questions set on the paper for each subject.

Feedback

Feedback to candidates is a matter for individual colleges. Most do not automatically send feedback apart from the decision itself. Candidates may seek feedback from their first college about any aspect of the admissions process, but should wait until the process is complete and they have received their decision before doing so.

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Dr Michael Spivey
Subject coordinator for Computer Science
December 2019

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Graphs of outcome by MAT score[3]

Computer Science and CS & Philosophy

Maths & Computer Science

- Not shortlisted
- Shortlisted but no offer
- Place offered

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[3] Data as at 20th January 2019. The graphs on this page do not include the 65 candidates who submitted a UCAS application but did not register for the MAT. None of them were shortlisted.