January 9, 2024

Feedback Report – History of Art

This year the University of Oxford had a high number of applicants for History of Art (98 in total, which represents 5.4 candidates per place offered). 49 candidates were invited for interview and 18 candidates were offered places, including one Open Offer. Many of the candidates who applied made very good applications and, as every year, many difficult decisions had to be made.

Throughout the process, contextual data for UK candidates, including school performance and postcode data, was used when assessing applications. There is more information about contextual data on the Oxford University website: http://www.ox.ac.uk/context. Candidates' individual and extenuating circumstances were also taken into account.

Unfortunately, not every applicant could be interviewed. Decisions about which candidates to interview were based on exam results and predictions, the UCAS academic reference and personal statement, and submitted written work. Each application was assessed by an Admissions Panel comprising representatives from all participating colleges together with members of the Department of History of Art.

Each candidate's UCAS form and written work were assessed against the subject's published selection criteria (https://www.hoa.ox.ac.uk/guidance-applicants) by two members of the panel. For every candidate, one assessor was a college representative from the candidate's first choice college, if a college preference was indicated. At the shortlisting meeting, attended by all members of the Admissions Panel, each applicant was considered on their own merits and also as part of the gathered field of all applicants. Contextual data and any special circumstances were taken into consideration as appropriate. Very careful consideration was given to all aspects of each application, including academic record (achieved results and predicted marks), the school reference, the personal statement, and the two required pieces of written work (a marked school essay, or equivalent, and a 750-word response to a piece of art, architecture or design). Interviewing decisions were not based on any single aspect of an application, but on the combined evidence presented to and very carefully considered by the Panel as a whole. Note that each candidate received an average overall application score (out of 10).

Each candidate invited to interview had two pre-scheduled online interviews on Microsoft Teams, each with a pair of interviewers from the Admissions Panel. For each candidate, at least one of the four interviewers was a representative of the candidate's first choice college, if a college preference was indicated. In their first interview, candidates were asked to discuss their application materials and written work; in their second interview, candidates were asked to discuss images with which they were unfamiliar. Note that each candidate received an overall average interview score (out of 10).

During the Final Selection Meeting, attended by all members of the Admissions Panel, all interviewed candidates were again assessed against the subject's published selection criteria (https://www.hoa.ox.ac.uk/guidance-applicants). The Panel's discussions were extensive. Decisions were once again not based on a single element of an application or on interview performance alone, but rather took account of each applicant on their own individual merits and also in the context of the gathered field as a whole. Contextual data and any special circumstances were again taken into consideration as appropriate. The Panel had to make many difficult decisions based on candidates' past and predicted achievements, performance at interview, written work (including the personal statement), and future potential. After very careful consideration of all the available evidence about an academically-strong field of high-achieving applicants, the Panel was unanimous in its final recommendations.