



Clare's Admissions Policy

Summary of the presentation given by the Senior Tutor to the Alumni Council 2007

University and College context

- Cambridge University has to turn away 5000 candidates each year who go on to achieve straight As at A-level. The admissions process therefore involves hard, often heartbreaking choices. There are simply more good candidates than places available.
- At the same time, there are many potential candidates who do not apply to Cambridge. Access initiatives run by the University and the College are designed to encourage all young people of talent and ability to apply, from all backgrounds.
- Clare consistently has one of the highest ratios of applicants per place (usually around 6 to 1). We are limited in the number of students we can admit both by external constraints (the University's target undergraduate number) and by the extent of our residential accommodation, since we believe that residing in College is an important part of the Cambridge student experience.

Interviewing policy

- At Clare, we normally only interview candidates who are predicted straight As at A-level. We do not have quotas for particular subjects (with the exception of medicine and veterinary medicine). We simply look for the best candidates across all disciplines, irrespective of school or family background or financial circumstances.
- Above all, we look for a combination of three qualities: achievement in the past, enthusiasm for the present, and potential for the future.
- To avoid discriminating against candidates from particular types of school, we cannot re-introduce a school-based Cambridge entrance exam, but candidates for certain subjects are asked to sit written tests when they come for interview. In addition, there are various multiple-choice aptitude tests, and candidates are often asked to comment orally on a piece of writing, diagram etc.
- Candidates typically have two different interviews, each conducted by two people. The time and effort devoted to the admissions process is considerable, but the College believes it is the only way of fairly assessing applicants and of choosing between candidates all of whom are extremely impressive on paper.
- In common with all Cambridge colleges, Clare looks at candidates' past academic achievement in the context of their school peer-group, so that exceptional drive and achievement are properly recognised.

Our aims

- Above all, we want to admit intellectual high-flyers who will flourish at Clare, gaining most from and contributing most to their time at Cambridge.
- To this end, extra-curricular activities such as sport, music or drama can be valuable indicators of enthusiasm and self-organisation. Nevertheless, academic excellence, enthusiasm for the subject and the potential to thrive at Cambridge are the overriding criteria for admission.