

Economics

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Example Timetable

The Cambridge academic year is split into three terms of eight weeks, with lectures taking place in the first two terms (Michaelmas and Lent)

The year starts with around 13 hours of lectures a week and these usually take place between 9am and 1pm

On top of lectures, there are 5-6 supervisions each week, which go into more detail about what was covered in lectures and require you to complete a problem sheet or write an essay.

What are Supervisions like?

The purpose of supervisions is to help solidify your understanding of what was covered in lectures, whilst also going into more depth

Naturally, they vary based on who the supervisor is, but I usually find them to be a good mix of challenging and interesting.

The higher teacher: student ratio may seem a bit intimidating at first with there being no place to hide, but you slowly get used to it and begin to enjoy them.

What is unique about the Cambridge course?

Economics at Cambridge is more mathematical than the majority of other Economics courses in the country.

Of course, the supervision system is also unique to Oxbridge, with these being more intense due to the higher teacher to student ratio than other universities.

What did you wish you knew when applying?

Read books with a purpose - try to have an idea about what you want to get out of it before you start. This should not be something like "I want to include it in my personal statement" as you should only include one or two here.

Favourite and worst thing about your subject?

Favourite: The breadth of the course means it never feels repetitive. If you are ever tired of doing some maths, you can always switch to doing a completely different paper, such as politics or history and vice versa.

Worst: There is a lot of reading to do for the politics and history papers, which can feel quite dull at times.

Application Timeline

Summer: Work on your personal statement as finishing the majority of this off would free up time to focus on your A-Levels when school starts again.

Preparation for the entrance test would also be a good idea. Look for ways to demonstrate an interest in the subject - books, essay competitions, etc.

September: Final touches to the personal statement and more of a focus on the entrance test.

October: Heavy entrance test preparation

November: Start preparing for interviews

Personal Statement Tips

Demonstrate a passion for the subject e.g. books

Don't talk about all the different books that you have read, but focus on one or two and write about how they have inspired you to do something further e.g. read a book about a topic which led you to write an article for your school's Economics magazine. You could also look to talk about opinions and what you thought about it, but steer clear of simply summarising it.

Entrance Test Tips

Do a lot of practice questions using past papers.

Practice doing maths fast, so skip the question if you think it will take time and then come back to it later.

Use other entrance exams with a mathematical focus for further practice.

Ultimately, do not worry too much as it is still possible to get an offer even if you do not do as well as you hoped in the test.

Interview Tips

Read the news and know what is going on in the world from an economic viewpoint

Be clear when talking through your ideas and talk through them in as much detail as possible.

If you are asked to do any maths, walk through every step and explain your reasoning for doing it.

Do not be afraid to ask questions as they do not expect you to know everything.

They expect you to make mistakes over the course of the interview, so do not get annoyed at yourself if you do end up making a few.

Try to demonstrate a unique point of view and justify it when asked further questions as this will help you to stand out.

Often the interview will feel as if it has not gone well, but this is very common so don't be afraid - it may not have been perfect, but they are not expecting perfection

Recommended reading/activities

It is not so much about the quantity of books that you read, but the amount of information you are able to absorb and understand.

Two books I would recommend are:

- “23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism” by Ha-Joon Chang. This provides a critique of capitalism, whilst also explaining the general theory of it in a way that is simple to understand.
- “Basic Economics” by Thomas Sowell. To provide an element of balance, this book advocates for a more laissez-faire approach and is a very good introduction to the main ideas of this theory.

Aside from books, essay competitions are a great way to demonstrate an interest as they provide you with an opportunity to go beyond the A-Level syllabus and also a chance to express your own ideas, which you can also cover in your personal statement.

