Admissions report

Modern Languages and Joint Schools

January 2024

The general arrangements for the Modern Languages Admissions process are described in the summary provided by the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages (see www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/how-apply).

This year, 752 candidates applied for Modern Languages and associated Joint Schools at Oxford, an increase of nearly 10% from the previous year (685).

In the first stage of the selection process, written applications are assessed. Factors taken into account are GCSE results (or equivalent), results of final exams predicted or already achieved, the UCAS reference, result of language test (a language aptitude test in the case of beginners' languages), and the submitted written work. None of these factors per se are applied in a 'hard' way: great attention is given to individual circumstances and contextual data. The scrutiny of UCAS forms, written work, and test results all took place in College prior to the interview period. Candidates who on the basis of this assessment do not meet the selection criteria are not normally invited for interview.

The number of applicants to individual colleges varies from year to year, and in order to ensure that candidates get the best possible chance of being considered, the faculty runs a sophisticated reallocation scheme. Candidates to oversubscribed colleges are reallocated to undersubscribed colleges offering the combination of languages or subjects for which they applied. Across the university, sixty-seven candidates (nearly 9% of the 752) were reallocated to another college and seen for interview there.

This year there were forty-three candidates for Modern Languages and Joint Schools who applied to Queen's. Of these, six were reallocated (of these six, two were offered a place at a different college), six were not short-listed for interview, and thirty-one were interviewed at Queen's. Several of our candidates were also interviewed by other colleges as well. We made fifteen offers for Modern Languages and Joint Schools, including two for the Opportunity Oxford scheme and one for deferred entry in 2025.

Interviews took place online via Microsoft Teams in the first week of December. During the interviews, candidates were given the opportunity to demonstrate their motivation and commitment, and their capacity for the sustained study of language and literature. They were assessed on their overall communication skills and, where appropriate, on their oral competence in the relevant language(s).

All candidates were given two interviews, each with two or three tutors present. Dual-language candidates received one interview for each language; for Joint Schools, one for the language and one for the other subject. Candidates who had applied for a sole-language course were given one interview for that language and one general interview with other Modern Languages tutors which typically focussed on motivation and on aptitude for the study of literature.

During the interviews, candidates were shown a literary text on their screen and given five minutes to prepare it for discussion. In this exercise, which is designed to resemble tutorial teaching, we were looking for analytical ability, attention to detail, capacity to exchange and build on ideas, clarity of thought and expression, and sensitivity to nuance. This formed the larger part of the interview, but the discussion also moved on to deal with the candidates' reading and literary interests and also, in the case of candidates applying to study a language they were already taking at school, to make some brief conversation in that language.

We were looking for evidence of candidates' independent reading, of independent thinking about literature, and the ability to make connections between texts, together with evidence of accuracy, fluency and convincing accent in the foreign language where this was tested. Throughout we were trying to assess candidates' potential for further study rather than their acquired knowledge. Further information about the selection criteria can be found on the Faculty website: www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/faqs#faq-12

We hope this information will be of some use to candidates thinking of applying next year, as well as to those who applied this year, whether successful or not.