My year in Cambridge has been truly transformative, both academically and personally. Life feels now like being split into “before” and “after” my MPhil. The discussions I had with my supervisor had a huge impact on my research. I’ve been part of several student communities, my department, my college and the Gates community — that is where the magic happened. I’ve learnt so much from my peers.

Georgiana Epure
MPhil International Relations and Politics, Romania

Cambridge attracts some of the best people in the world in almost all subjects. This environment allows you to interact with researchers at the forefront of their fields, and provides an opportunity to share your own work. The university offers access to spaces where you can set up partnerships and collaborations with industry and colleagues in other leading institutions.

Nafisa Waziri
PhD International Relations and Politics, Nigeria

Cambridge seemed like a foreign, strange place when I first began my MPhil, but the year here with friends from all over the world quickly made it a second home to me. Whether in the comforts of the college common room or over tea with my supervisor and research group, there’s a place for everyone here to learn — also about themselves and the world around them.

Erica Cao
MPhil Music, USA
Cambridge is a hub of knowledge that is increasingly becoming more global as more people from developing countries are starting to study there. It still has a long way to go, but that is why it is important that diverse students from across the globe apply, so that we can begin to build a more truly global knowledge base.

Taskeen Adam  
PhD Development Studies, South Africa

“It’s been an immense privilege to pursue my PhD in Cambridge, where I have had the opportunity of engaging with fascinating and inspiring people developing cutting-edge research and learning from their different cultural and professional backgrounds.”

Paulo Savaget  
PhD Engineering, Brazil

“Cambridge has extremely valuable resources from all points of view – amazing facilities, great access to information sources, and of course, brilliant human resources in the form of lecturers, supervisors and your fellow peers and college-mates.”

Alexandru Savu  
PhD Economics, Romania

Cambridge is a hub of knowledge that is increasingly becoming more global as more people from developing countries are starting to study there. It still has a long way to go, but that is why it is important that diverse students from across the globe apply, so that we can begin to build a more truly global knowledge base.

Taskeen Adam  
PhD Development Studies, South Africa
Welcome to the Cambridge University Graduate Alternative Prospectus!

We are a group of postgraduate students who felt there was a need for information about postgraduate life at Cambridge from the perspective of students, and particularly from those from outside the UK.

This document will give you an overview of studying and living in Cambridge, some guidance and tips for the application process and where to look for funding. Ultimately, we have tried to demystify applying and studying at Cambridge. We have included information that we wish we had known before applying.

We hope our hindsight assists your decision to apply and study at the University of Cambridge. It is truly a unique experience to be here, but does have its quirks!

Best of luck!

University of Cambridge Postgraduates

This initiative was led by the Gates Cambridge Scholars’ Council and the Graduate Union. Thank you to Jerelle Joseph, Alex Kong and Olly McMillan for the photos featured throughout this Prospectus.
Contents

Why Cambridge?....................................................................................................................7
Departments and Courses........................................................................................................9
College Selection....................................................................................................................10
Application Process...............................................................................................................13
Graduate Scholarships...........................................................................................................17
Living in Cambridge.............................................................................................................21
Students with Families..........................................................................................................28
Cambridge Glossary...............................................................................................................29
From Newton’s laws of motion, to Watson, Crick & Franklin’s structure of DNA, to countless leaders in business, academia, politics, culture and sport, it’s impossible to miss Cambridge’s influence on the world. Here are some reasons why you might want to apply.

World Class Reputation
The University of Cambridge is consistently ranked as one of the top universities in the world. Cambridge’s reputation is truly global, and will help you further your career in any field you wish to explore.

Ground-breaking Research
Cambridge has produced countless Nobel Prize Winners, Fields Medallists and more. Researchers at the University work on projects with the potential to change the world.

Lessons from the Best
Cambridge employs a diverse range of internationally competitive researchers. By studying with them, you have a unique opportunity to learn from the best and brightest in your field.

Exciting Graduate Life
Cambridge offers a huge number of opportunities for graduate students to get involved, from casual or competitive sports, to orchestras, theatre, debating and anything else you can imagine.

Vibrant Global Community
The University of Cambridge hosts over 6,000 graduate students from all backgrounds and walks of life. With around two-thirds coming from overseas, graduate communities have a very international and welcoming feel.

Wide Range of Funding Options
There are a huge number of funding options available for Graduate Students to study at Cambridge. These include the University, Colleges and external scholarships.

Historic Town and University
The University of Cambridge has a varied and exciting history extending over 800 years.

Unique College System
The College system allows you to easily meet people from all sorts of fields, countries and backgrounds that you might never otherwise encounter!
It can be easy to get lost in the different departments at Cambridge. Officially, there are 91 different departments offering postgraduate courses, and it is not always obvious which one best suits you. Engineering is a separate department from Chemical Engineering, many people at the Vet School can barely walk a dog, and very few people in the Department of Geography would call themselves geographers. It is useful to have a good look around to find the best fit; you may be better suited to a department that goes by a different name that it did at your previous academic home.

Particularly if you are pursuing a PhD course, it is important to be familiar with the research carried out in the department, as well as any affiliated research centres and clusters. This will give you an idea of the intellectual environment and the interests you may share with your potential colleagues.

Postgraduate courses at Cambridge include:

- **PhD (Doctor of Philosophy)**: 3-4 years of full-time research, although there may be a taught component in the first year.
- **MPhil (Master of Philosophy), MRes (Master of Research), MSt (Master of Studies)**: typically 9-12 months of taught, research or combined courses.
- **Specialist Masters degrees, e.g. MBA, EMBA, MCL**: 1 to 2 years of group work, often part-time and in collaboration with industry partners

For a list of all departments at the university visit:

www.cam.ac.uk/colleges-and-departments/department-a-z

To explore and learn more about the huge range of postgraduate courses see:

www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses

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I find Cambridge a life-changing experience. It is not just what you learn but also what you discover about yourself. Being a PhD student every year I compare myself with what I was a year before and I end up surprising myself. Cambridge pushes you to reach for places you never thought you were capable of accessing.

Aliya Khalid
Pakistan, PhD Education
The University of Cambridge includes 31 Colleges. As a Cambridge postgraduate student you will also be a member of a College, which, if you wish, can be a huge part of your Cambridge experience. It is important to think thoroughly about this when applying, as on your application form you can choose to rank the two colleges that you would most like to join. You can also decide not to indicate a preference by making an open application.

Colleges offer accommodation, dining (daily meals as well as formal dinners), social events, academic funding, libraries, chapels, and much more. It is up to you to decide how much to be involved. Colleges are central to the undergraduate academic experience at Cambridge. For Postgraduate students, they provide a social community and are sources of academic and welfare support. Your College will include people studying a range of subjects, so it offers an excellent opportunity to meet others from outside your own Department.

For many students, their College becomes their primary social group and their home. Other students might rent accommodation privately and go to their College very rarely. The College system is confusing at first, but can add enormous value to your experience at Cambridge if you want it to.

To learn more about Cambridge Colleges visit:
www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/colleges

This video also explains the College system:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=1T42ex43u48

For a student perspective, the undergraduate alternative prospectus contains information on Colleges:
www.applytocambridge.com/colleges

Some factors that you might wish to consider when choosing your preferred Colleges are listed below. (Don’t worry if you don’t get your first College - every single one has its own advantages!)

Every student is a member of one of the University’s 31 Colleges. Old or new, traditional or progressive, big or small, your College plays a big role in your unique Cambridge experience.

I love the College environment – it’s such a unique way to be able to make friends with people from different countries, backgrounds and disciplines that you would never otherwise interact with. It’s also an easy way to become involved in all sorts of activities.

Oliver McMillan
New Zealand, PhD Engineering
Accommodation
Quality of accommodation and proximity to where you will be spending your time are important for many people when ranking their College preferences. You should note that graduate College accommodation is often not located on the main College site. Many Colleges own buildings and houses in various locations throughout Cambridge and it is worth checking each College’s Accommodation webpage for details. If you plan to bring a family or partner it is also worth noting that some Colleges offer flats for couples and families while others do not.

One major difference between Colleges is the length of time for which they can offer accommodation. Some only guarantee accommodation for one year, while others offer housing throughout your PhD.

The university also offers successful applicants access to the University Accommodation Service which lists private and university owned rentals for students (www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk/). After receiving confirmation of admission, you can create an account and access this information. If you are an international student this service has an added bonus that the accommodation being advertised has gone through strict and generally reliable university checks.

Facilities
Most Colleges will have a library, chapel, dining hall and/or cafeteria, bar, common room, sports grounds, and gardens. Consider how much you think you will use these facilities and which are the most important to you. Examples include: if your department does not provide you with an office then you may use the College library regularly; if you do not cook at home then you may use the College dining hall; if you anticipate regularly visiting the common room or gardens, you should have a look online at each College’s facilities and consider how easily accessible the college might be from your department.

Funding
Colleges vary significantly in terms of the funding they offer for things like fieldwork, academic supplies, and hardship. If your course involves fieldwork or major expenses that your department or funding body will not cover, then consider choosing a College that might help with this. Some Colleges even offer full scholarships for students who fit particular criteria – have a look into which of these you might be eligible for before applying, as many require you to put that college as your first choice on your College application.
Social Life

Colleges offer all sorts of social opportunities from dinners, bops (discos), Graduate and College bars, family BBQs, sports outings, movie nights and lots more.

There are two graduate-only Colleges (Clare Hall and Darwin), Colleges for mature students over 21 years of age (Hughes Hall, Lucy Cavendish, St Edmunds, and Wolfson), and female-only Colleges (Newnham, Lucy Cavendish and Murray Edwards). Colleges also vary in how much they emphasise Cambridge traditions, with some requiring gowns at every dinner and others never at all! Consider what type of environment would be most attractive for you when selecting your preferred Colleges.

Student Societies

Student societies can be University-wide or specific to Colleges or Departments. They are usually well-organised and governed by a council comprised of various officers that are elected annually or bi-annually.

University societies are typically either for more competitive sports (where students represent the University and earn ‘blues’), for University-wide representation (e.g. Graduate Union, Cambridge University Students Association), wider academic groups (e.g. Astronomical Society), for regional groups (e.g. Cambridge University Australia and New Zealand Society).

College societies are a useful way to be involved at a more casual level, and include things like sports teams, jazz bands, political discussion groups, LGBT groups, book clubs and much more. These are a good opportunity to try a new sport or hobby for the first time in a relaxed environment. Colleges will also have their own graduate student associations that organise activities for students and represent students to the College administration.

For a list of student societies across the University see: www.societies.cam.ac.uk
In this section we outline a number of issues which warrant special attention. However, in the first instance please always refer to the specific requirements for your course on the graduate admissions website: www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses

Entry Requirements
There are country-specific guidelines for entry requirements, as the university recognises variation in qualification frameworks between institutions and regions.

It is recommended that you look up the international equivalency of your qualification on the UK’s National Recognition Information Centre’s website (www.naric.org.uk/naric/), which enables you to compare your international qualification against the UK qualification framework level. For example, the country-specific postgraduate University minimum entry requirement for Nigeria is a Bachelor’s Degree with an overall grade of First Class Honours, 70%+, or GPA 4.5/5.0, A or A+. For more information of international qualifications see the Graduate Admissions page: www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/international-qualifications.

Application Process
Applying to Cambridge can seem like a daunting process. In addition to preparing your application you will need to provide a number of supporting documents and make many decisions, including picking a College!

Choosing a Department and Supervisor
Postgraduate studies and research are significant undertakings, so it is important to choose a project that you are passionate about and one that stimulates your curiosity. Simultaneously, you want to be sure that the academic environment is supportive and enriching. Your academic supervisors and/or advisors are vital to finding this balance, as they will support and guide your research and will be invaluable to your professional development. Finding the right supervisor is therefore a critical part of your postgraduate career if you are pursuing a PhD or research-based Master’s. Note that for completely taught Master’s degrees there is often no need for you to contact a supervisor during the application process.

To find a supervisor, start by using the departmental website to identify academics whose work is relevant to your research interests. Take time to read through the publication records of research groups or individual scholars to identify work or ideas that you find exciting. From this research, draw up a shortlist of individuals with whom you would want to work, and draft a description of the type of problem or project that you find interesting.

I would definitely recommend hunting down someone who is here and has gone through the application to have a chat. Most graduate students will be more than happy to give you a hand.

Eduardo Machcado
Bolivia, PhD Archaeology
Contacting a Potential Supervisor

The next step is to approach academics with whom you would be interested in working to discuss research opportunities and to establish if they would be a good fit as your supervisor. The first contact with a potential supervisor is very important to make a good impression, as most academics are approached by many potential students. Before you reach out to a potential supervisor, you should do your homework by reading their publications and web pages as you want to convey an interest and understanding of their field and work. Prepare questions about their body of work, think of other applications or contexts for it, and be prepared to explain your own academic background and experience.

We suggest the following steps when writing to a prospective supervisor. Your first contact will likely be an e-mail in which you should introduce yourself as well as give him or her a good idea of your experience and ideas concerning research opportunities. Briefly introduce yourself and your academic/work history, including the institutions, major subjects, and the title of any individual research projects undertaken. Explain why you think he or she would be an ideal match for your research, specifying pieces of work or publications that you have found interesting.

Importantly, include some of the questions or ideas that you generated when reading their writing or similar work in the field. Try to relate your ideas and questions to your connection to the field. Briefly outline some of your thoughts in a short research proposal and ask, if he or she is interested in taking your application further, to discuss and work on developing a full research proposal.

The proposal should contextualise your questions or project within the larger body of knowledge, offer some specific aims and objectives (or questions), discuss the approaches or methods you hope to utilise, and discuss your proposed research’s importance or applicability. Set your questions and proposal alongside a discussion of your previous work and try to highlight your strengths as a researcher and student.

You should attach your CV (see below), which can elaborate on your academic and external achievements. You should offer a writing sample, if you have a polished document from previous work, or a coding sample, if relevant.

You may need to send a follow-up email, as there is a chance your message might get lost in a full inbox. But, give potential supervisors a fair amount of time to respond and understand that some academics might not be in a position to accept new students.
Resume/CV
You should attach a copy of your short CV to your first contact e-mail, to give potential supervisors a good idea of your achievements and experience. The CV should be tailored to showcase your academic and relevant work experience record, and should emphasise academic achievements such as distinctions and scholarships. Your CV should also include brief details of any research projects undertaken previously, including a very brief overview of the knowledge and skills gained in conducting the research. You should also emphasise relevant skills and concrete experience such specific laboratory techniques, language skills, and programming skills, especially if you have undertaken specialised training. Highlight any publications and conferences at which you have presented. The CV should be well-rounded but not a list of everything you have ever achieved; include the most relevant information.

Research Proposal
Most applications for a PhD (and some master's programmes) require a research proposal as a supporting document. The need for and format of research proposals varies between fields and departments. You should check the departmental website, or ask your proposed supervisor or departmental secretary for information regarding the official format. However, it is always a good idea to have a short description of your proposed research (as discussed in the previous section) prepared before making contact. Doing so can show potential supervisors that you have a good understanding of the gaps in the field, and that you have already begun to generate questions and consider methodological approaches. You will also need a concise version of your research proposal for the online application. How a research proposal is framed is very subject-dependent, so it is recommended that you develop yours in consultation with your proposed supervisor or a senior academic in the field.

The general aim of a research proposal is to outline the context for your proposed research. It should start with the background and rationale of the work, including a brief analysis of relevant existing work and the significance of the intervention that your proposed work would make. Highlight your understanding of the current state of the field, the gaps you have identified, the questions you propose, and the importance or translatability of the work. You should then state your aims and objectives and relate them to your research questions. Clearly outline your data sources and how they relate to your research question. You should then outline your methodology or the theoretical framework you propose to use to address your questions. Be sure to justify why these methods are best suited to approaching your research questions. Finally, include any ethical considerations or potential collaborations you’ve considered.

Be realistic about the scope of your proposal, and remember that your questions need to be answerable in the timeframe of your degree. Always remember to use very clear language, and be as concise as possible.

If you’re applying for a research course then it’s hugely beneficial to get in touch with a supervisor here and work together to come up with a project outline (both for your application and the actual research). I was pleasantly surprised at how many of the professors responded to me cold-emailing them – it wasn’t as scary as I thought it might be. They will get a lot of these though, so make sure you present yourself well and are directly to the point.

Cansu Karabiyik
Denmark, PhD Medical Science
English Language Requirements

If English is not your native language, you will need to prove you have a high level of English language competency before the university confirms your offer. This is a very strict requirement, and is rarely waived. You are required to be able to competently communicate in English generally as well as in your subject-specific vocabulary.

Whether you require proof of your English language competency depends on your native language and other conditions such as the country in which you previously studied. If you’ve previously studied in an English-speaking country for the required period of time, this may be sufficient to demonstrate language competency. You can check whether your language ability needs to be assessed and the required medium of assessment on the graduate admissions language requirement webpage (www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/international-students/competence-english/will-i-have-language-requirement). Depending on your situation, your competence might be assessed by the University Language Centre, or you might be asked to provide a valid language test (meeting the minimum requirements of an IELTS or TOEFL qualification certificate). You will receive instructions on your possible options for demonstrating if you receive a conditional offer of acceptance.

My Cambridge application was a great learning experience for me. I had to write around three personal statements: one for the LMB, one for Gates and another one for the Cambridge Trust. Each one of those statements had to slightly differ in their content to avoid sounding iterative. In the process of sculpting my application by putting down into pen and paper my thoughts, ambitions and how I will enable them, I discovered a great deal about myself.

Anantha Kumar
India, PhD Molecular Biology
There are many scholarships available for graduate studies at the University of Cambridge. While the University has large central funding bodies that grant scholarships to graduates (e.g. the Cambridge Trust, Gates Cambridge), there are also many scholarships from other providers that are available to students based on a range of criteria. Some scholarships are available to students from specific countries (e.g. The Maria Luisa de Sanchez Scholarship for students of Venezuelan nationality) or to those studying a specific subject (e.g. The Ramanujan Research Studentship in Mathematics).

The cost of attending Cambridge depends on your course and fee status. The graduate admissions course directory (www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses) will indicate the total cost based on the course you are applying to and your fee status.

The total cost of studying is a combination of the University Composition Fee and Maintenance costs. The University Composition Fee covers the cost of your education and College membership. The maintenance cost is the predicted minimum cost of living in Cambridge for the duration of your course.

You can find more about these costs here: www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/finance. Some scholarships cover partial costs while others cover all costs (i.e. both the University Composition Fee and Maintenance costs).

Major Internal Scholarships

The Graduate Funding Competition (www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/finance/funding/graduate-funding-competition) grants funding from a range of sources including the Cambridge Trust, Gates Cambridge, ESRC, and AHRC. To be considered in the Graduate Funding Competition you need to submit your application for admission and supporting documents to the University in time for course-specific deadlines.

The scholarship application is part of the admission application form. Any additional information required for you to be considered for these scholarships will be noted within the online application to your course. In the case of scholarships by the Cambridge Trust, you may need to specify for which scholarships you would like to be considered. Please see their database for possible scholarships: www.cambridgetrust.org/scholarships/

Note that all non-UK nationalities, from any income bracket and for most degree subjects, are eligible for the Cambridge International Scholarship and the Gates Cambridge scholarship. These scholarships also do not require applicants to be admitted to a specific college.

Depending on what course you are applying for, the 2018-2019 deadline is either December 6, 2017 or January 4, 2018. Check the course directory (link above) to identify the relevant deadlines. The funding
deadline is outlined in a grey bar on the right side of the screen.

**Graduate Funding Search Tool**

The best place to find the scholarships for which you might be eligible is the University of Cambridge funding search:

[www.student-funding.cam.ac.uk/](http://www.student-funding.cam.ac.uk/)

The graduate funding search tool enables you to search by teaching level, i.e. if you are applying for a taught course (e.g. MPhil) or a research-based course (e.g. PhD); by Department; by Citizenship and by Application Procedure (if an additional application is required or it is part of the central graduate funding competition).

**Applicant Portal**

When you apply online ([www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applicant-portal](http://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applicant-portal)), under the Funding section in Scholarships, you will be asked ‘Do you wish to be considered for funding, including Cambridge Trust and other merit based scholarships’. If you click ‘yes’ to declare your interest and submit by the deadline, then you will be considered for the central funding competition.

**Gates Cambridge**

The next section under Funding is specific to the Gates Cambridge Scholarship. The Gates Cambridge Trust is looking for applicants that display the following criteria:

- Academic excellence
- Leadership potential
- A commitment to improving the lives of others
- A good academic fit with Cambridge

To apply for the Gates Cambridge Scholarship you need to submit additional documents. These include:

- **Personal Statement**: A 3000 character personal statement that explains why you are applying for a Gates Cambridge Scholarship and how you meet the four main criteria. More guidance on this personal statement and an explanation of the selection criteria can be found here: [www.gatescambridge.org/apply](http://www.gatescambridge.org/apply)

- **Curriculum Vitae/resume**

- **Non-academic reference**: The contact details of an additional non-academic referee specific to Gates Cambridge. Your referee should be able to comment on your experience and potential specific to the Gates Cambridge criteria.

**Other Internal Scholarships**

There are a huge number of other scholarships available to support students undertaking graduate study at the University of Cambridge. You are
automatically considered for many of these scholarships based on your application, but there are many others available that require separate individual applications and have specific deadlines. The best way to find out about these scholarships and their associated deadlines is using the student funding search.

Many of these other scholarships offered internally through the University of Cambridge have specific requirements. For example, some are for:

**Students from specific continents** (E.g. Trinity Bursaries for Students from Africa)
- This bursary covers the full fees and costs for a students from any African country to pursue any taught graduate course

**Students from specific countries** (E.g. the Arthington-Davy Grant for Tongan Students)
- This scholarship covers up to the full costs of any graduate course from students born in Tonga of Tongan parents

**Students engaged in certain activities** (E.g. the AGM Randeree Scholarship)
- This scholarship, open to applications from all EU countries, covers the full costs of a graduate degree for students who are active within their local/faith community and have demonstrated leadership within a multi-faith/secular environment

**Students studying specific subjects** (E.g. the Geoffrey Moorhouse Gibson Studentship in Chemistry)
- This scholarship, open to students of any nationality, covers the full fees and costs to pursue a PhD in Chemistry

**Students engaged in particular research areas** (E.g. the Aziz Foundation Scholarship)
- This scholarship covers the full costs of a MPhil course for a student interested in researching how the needs of British Muslim communities may be met through public policy work with an aim of creating a more cohesive Britain

**Students applying to a specific department or topic area** (E.g. the Soudavar Research Studentships in Persian Studies)
- This grant open to students of any nationality, applying to the Department of Middle Eastern Studies and interested in researching any aspect of Persian Studies in the Islamic period
College scholarships

Some scholarships are offered by particular Colleges. Many such scholarships require that you list the awarding college as your first choice in your application. Read the application requirements for these scholarships carefully. There are also internal awards listed on College websites. If you are applying to a specific College, check their website.

External scholarships

There are also a wide range of scholarships available from external funding bodies.

These websites allow you to search for scholarships available in the UK:
- www.scholars4dev.com
- www.study-uk.britishcouncil.org
- www.scholarship-search.org.uk

Some major external scholarships include:

British Chevening Scholarships
Funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office the Chevening Scholarship enables students with leadership qualities from across the world to undertake graduate studies in the United Kingdom
www.chevening.org/

Marshall Scholarship
Marshall Scholarships finance young Americans to study for a graduate degree in the United Kingdom
www.marshallscholarship.org/

Commonwealth Scholarships for Developing Commonwealth Countries
Funded by the UK Department for International Development, these scholarships offer citizens from developing Commonwealth countries the opportunity to pursue Masters or PhD studies in the UK
http://cscuk.dfid.gov.uk/apply/scholarships-developing-cw/

Government websites
Most governments also have a website that will tell you what scholarships you are eligible for study abroad. An example from New Zealand is
www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/scholarships
Cambridge may be a small town but there is plenty to do when you take a much-needed break.

Despite being small, Cambridge has all the elements of a large city set within a picturesque environment. The University of Cambridge (along with Anglia Ruskin University) attracts many international students as well as faculty, giving Cambridge an international feel.

Life in Cambridge follows the seasons of the university. During term, the city is particularly busy because the undergraduate students are in residence. All academic activities are held within the three eight-week terms.

During term time you will find yourself attending lectures and conferences, many of which may be unrelated to your course! Cambridge offers many opportunities to broaden your academic horizons. Tourists descend on the city en masse in the spring and summer months, but are present all year round.

Outside of term time, the city quietens down. For graduate students, this gives you time for more intensive research and also for enjoying the city. And if you ever want an escape, London is only a 50 minute train ride away!

Social and Cultural Life

Films
There are several cinemas in town, and most offer student tickets. Do not miss the Cambridge Arts Picturehouse, which has a great bar and a truly amazing selection of alternative, independent, and foreign films. Cambridge also hosts an annual film festival.

Museums
Cambridge is home to a number of museums. The Fitzwilliam Museum on Trumpington Street holds an impressive collection of art. Several academic departments also maintain small, free museums with priceless displays. Examples include the Sedgwick Museum in the Earth Sciences department, the Whipple Museum of the History of Science, the Scott Polar Museum, and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

The harmony with which life exists in Cambridge is alluring. The historical colleges at Cambridge are a treat to explore. Student life is unique and forms a major part of the wonderful Cambridge experience.

Aliya Khalid
Pakistan, PhD Education
Music, Choruses and Theatre

The ADC Theatre puts on a range of shows each term. Other venues to check out are the Anglia Ruskin University theatre, The Corn Exchange, and The Junction.

Cambridge is renowned for its bustling music scene, and particularly for its choral music. A great way to listen to beautiful music any night of the week is to go to Evensong in one of the college chapels. King’s College Chapel is famous for both its choir and its beauty. The West Road Concert Hall is the city’s main venue for classical music.

Gardens

When the weather is pleasant, Cambridge is truly beautiful. Many colleges have well-maintained gardens which are free for students to visit. The Botanic Gardens, opened to the public in 1846, are world-class and are also free for students. They are beautiful, especially in the spring.

Many students also enjoy walking or cycling through the meadows to Grantchester, a small village about 2.5 miles (4 kilometres) from Cambridge, which is home to poets, orchards, cows, and swans.

Nightlife

While most pubs have a very early last call in England (usually 11:00 PM), there are many avenues for post-dinner dancing and drinking in Cambridge. Many Colleges and student societies organise “bops” or dance parties for students. There are also several nightclubs in town.

Eating

While we cannot claim Cambridge (or even the UK!) as a culinary centre there is enough variety in grocery stores and restaurants here to satisfy most tastes and, importantly, most student budgets!

Formal halls in Colleges are a popular and affordable opportunity to socialise over a meal.
**Accommodation**

Accommodation costs in Cambridge are close to those in London. You should be aware that a substantial part of your monthly budget will be needed to cover these costs.

Most Colleges provide accommodation. Some offer rooms for the first year of your programme; others for the duration of your programme. The type of accommodation also varies between Colleges, although generally students are provided with a room with shared kitchen and communal facilities. Some colleges offer ensuite rooms; others only offer shared bathrooms. Most college housing (other than the women-only colleges) accommodates both genders. Costs also vary considerably between Colleges.

It is important that you research housing options before listing College preferences, especially if you have any specific housing requirements.

Most Masters students stay in College accommodation for the duration of their course. Many PhD start in College accommodation and then move to private housing once they have spent some time in Cambridge. The private housing market varies; you can find a good deal but it requires a lot of effort and some luck. It is also common to go through real estate agencies but there are fees involved and they can be expensive. Sometimes it is possible to rent directly from the landlord. Note too that most students live in a shared house (usually between 3-5 bedrooms) rather than in shared flats.

The university also has its own Accommodation Service where you can search for housing that has been screened by the university. Often these properties are owned by members of the university.

You will only be able to search for properties after you have been accepted to your course. See: www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk.
Visa Information
It is highly likely that if you are coming to study in the UK for 6 months or more you will require a Tier 4 student visa. You must apply for this visa in your country of nationality or from another country in which you hold a valid non-tourist visa. In order to submit an application you must have met all of your offer conditions and received a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) from the University. A CAS is a unique number which is generated by the University when you receive a full offer.

The International Student Team ([www.ist.admin.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ist.admin.cam.ac.uk)) are responsible for issuing you with a CAS. They also provide specialist immigration support to students with an offer to study at Cambridge.

Guidance on how to apply for your visa as well as general advice about studying at Cambridge can be found on the International Student Team’s website: [www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/applying/uk-immigration](http://www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/applying/uk-immigration).

The team are also able to check visa applications and provide advice via email. They can be contacted by emailing: internationalstudents@admin.cam.ac.uk

Note that your visa allows you to work for 20 hours a week in the UK, but as a Cambridge student, the university has its own regulations which limit this to 10 hours per week. See: [www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/graduate-study/your-student-status/working-while-you-study](http://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/graduate-study/your-student-status/working-while-you-study).

Transportation
Cambridge is a small city, so everything is relatively close. The centre of town is easily walkable and students who live in colleges in the city centre can get away with walking to most destinations.

However, Cambridge is known to be one of the most cycle-friendly cities in the UK. Cycling is very common and is the preferred transportation method for many faculty, staff, and students. There are also a few public bus services, but note that these service only certain destinations and can have limited timetables. The U-Bus links several common destinations, for example the train station, Addenbrookes Hospital, and the Biomedical Campus. However, cycling can often be faster. There are a few private taxi companies that operate in Cambridge. Most inner city destinations cost be between 7 and 10 pounds.

If you are planning on driving in the UK, you may need to get a UK driving license. See: [www.gov.uk/driving-nongb-licence](http://www.gov.uk/driving-nongb-licence).
Students with Families

Studying in Cambridge with your partner and/or children is not impossible, although it does require some planning. Below are a number of things to take into consideration while applying, after applying, and when you and your family arrive.

Before applying
The first thing to note is that your course will need to be at least 12 months long in order for you to be permitted to bring your partner and/or children with you as dependents. Note that some Masters courses are only 9 months long.

Accommodation in Cambridge is expensive and therefore acquiring accommodation for your family through your college will probably be the best option in terms of cost, size, and location. If you plan bring your family to Cambridge, it is recommended that you pick a college that provides housing options for families for the duration of your programme. Do your research and get in touch with colleges about couples and family accommodation as early as possible. A small number of Colleges also have nurseries. If you have children under the school age this is worth taking into account, as day-care is expensive and challenging to secure in Cambridge.

Preparing for your arrival in Cambridge
If you will need nursery or child-minding services for your children under 4 years of age, apply as early as possible to nurseries around Cambridge. Start by getting in touch with the University Childcare Services (www.childcare.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us). This office oversees the facilities and assistance offered to University staff and students with children and, most importantly, it runs two day nurseries at Edwinstowe Close and at the West Cambridge site for children from three months to school age. The waiting list to these nurseries is nearly a year long, so it’s important to get your child registered as soon as possible.

For private childcare service providers, the Cambridge City Council has an accessible database where you can check to see who is legally licenced to provide childcare services. This also includes childcare services for children of school age: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/childcare-and-early-learning/.

The availability of family accommodations can and should be an important factor when choosing your College. Make careful use of Colleges’ accommodation web pages. Quite a few Colleges, including some of the most popular ones, offer either no family accommodations at all or have only a limited number of units available. Others, like St John’s College and Churchill College offer many more options for families. Although family accommodations will certainly be pricier than regular student rooms, they will usually be substantially cheaper than analogous housing options on the private market.

If the College you are admitted to is unable to provide family accommodation, contact and register with the University’s Accommodation Service, who can help support you in your search for a home in Cambridge. The University administers a number of properties
that are available for rent or sale. If you register with them you can also access to rental listings in the area. The service is more trustworthy than other online listings (especially when searching from afar) and protects newcomers to Cambridge from scam websites.

**Primary and Secondary School Applications**

Parents of school-aged children should bear in mind that the application process for both primary and secondary schools is a lengthy one that should be started well in advance of your arrival in Cambridge. The application deadlines differ depending on the stage of schooling your child will be joining. If your child will be starting primary or secondary school in Cambridge, i.e. joining Year 1 (first year of primary school) or Year 7 (first year of secondary school), you will often be faced with much earlier admissions deadlines than when joining other years.

If applying for any other year, except Year 1 and Year 7, you will have to go through the so-called “in-year application process”, which gives you slightly more leeway with its first deadline currently set on June 10th (compared to early May for Year 1 and end of March for Year 7). Please be aware that later applications will only be considered after the offers for those who complied with the June deadline are issued in mid-July. It is important to note that you cannot apply fewer than six weeks before your child is to start school. In general, it is advisable to apply as early as possible, as in-year places are not always available and the best schools tend to get quite full. All the relevant up-to-date deadlines and the application requirements can be found on the Cambridgeshire County Council website ([www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)).

One of the key components of your child’s school application is your proof of residence. Do keep in mind that most Colleges do not allocate your housing until August, in which case you will need to request an official letter from your college where they guarantee you accommodations. If you plan to reside in private accommodation, you might want to sort out your housing situation early, and may even consider making an advance payment, in order to receive confirmation
from the landlord that you will be in residence starting September. A letter like this, similar to the College-provided one, could be supplied as proof of residence on your child’s application.

When choosing schools, a good place to start is the Ofsted report. Ofsted is a governmental organisation that regularly inspects schools and provides detailed reports and an overall effectiveness grade (these can be found on [www.reports.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.reports.ofsted.gov.uk)). Many schools in Cambridge are rated as “Good” and “Outstanding”.

**After arriving in Cambridge**

It can often be isolating or overwhelming to be in Cambridge while caring for your family, particularly for those parents who are in England without their partner or any other support system. Thankfully, there are a number of services that can be helpful. One of them is the University Newcomer and Visiting Scholars group ([www.nvs.admin.cam.ac.uk/](http://www.nvs.admin.cam.ac.uk/)), which organises events throughout the year. All are welcome, whether here alone or with family. Every Tuesday morning, a fun and relaxed meeting is held in the University Centre in Granta Place from 9.45-11:30am. Other events are hosted by the University Childcare Services who have a Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/childcareuniversityofcambridge/](http://www.facebook.com/childcareuniversityofcambridge/)) as well as the Cambridge University Student Parent Society ([www.facebook.com/groups/335576598063536/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/335576598063536/)). Both provide excellent support and a great way to meet other student parents.

And finally, it is important to be aware that raising a family in Cambridge can be financially draining. Some scholarships offer a family allowance (e.g. the Gates Family allowance which is a quarterly allocation based on the number of children living with you). There are bursaries available through the University Childcare Services to help with registered pre-school and out-of-school childcare costs for EU and overseas students. These are also calculated on the basis of family income and expenditures and require a recommendation from your College Tutor.
Cambridge Glossary

As an 800-year old institution, Cambridge has more than its share of unusual traditions and jargon. Here are some essentials to familiarise yourself with before arriving in Cambridge.

**‘Blues’:** Varsity sports here at Cambridge are called “Blues.” You can play for your college (like intramural or club level sports in the US) or you can play for the university and earn a Blue.

**Bop:** (Big Open Party) Cambridge lingo for a big party thrown by a college or society.

**Cambridge Union:** The Union (technically the Cambridge Union Society, and not to be confused with Cambridge University Students’ Union or the Graduate Union) is the oldest student debating society in the world and served as an example for the Oxford and Yale Political Unions. See: https://cus.org/

**Ceilidh:** Pronounced “Kay-lee,” this is a Scottish or Irish line dance, with fiddle, flute, accordion, and sometimes bagpipes for music. A caller explains the moves, and calls when to take each step.

**Matriculation:** A bigger deal for some colleges than others, it marks your official entrance to Cambridge. Your ability to get a degree depends on your date of matriculation. For example, you cannot get your Ph.D. until 3 years following your matriculation (and of course after submitting your dissertation!). Many colleges mark matriculation with a group photo, a dinner, and by requiring you to sign the ‘Matriculation Register.’

**Middle Combination Room (MCR):**
This is the graduate community in your college. The undergraduate population in each college is usually known as a JCR (Junior Combination Room) and the Fellows as a SCR (Senior Combination Room). Usually there is both a physical room in which graduate students can hang out, as well as an organisation that runs events for and represents the interests of the graduate students. At some Colleges, the MCR will have adopted a different name (e.g. at St. Johns it is the Samuel Butler Society, and at Trinity College it is the BA Society).

**Porters:** At many colleges, they’re awesome characters and supremely helpful, although occasionally they can be a bit strict and ornery. Be polite and learn to get along with them. They usually offer stamps, fax machines, keys, first aid, bookings for Formal Hall, and other goodies. They also handle your mail.

**Punts:** These are flat-bottomed boats that are ubiquitous on the River Cam, especially in spring and summer. They make for a great day out and a fun thing to do with visiting parents or friends. See if your college has them for hire (rent) or if a friend’s college does — this will be the cheapest option. Darwin, St. John’s, St. Edmund’s, King’s, Queens’ and Trinity Colleges all have punts available for students and guests.
Useful Links

Cambridge Africa: [www.cambridge-africa.cam.ac.uk/opportunities/study/](http://www.cambridge-africa.cam.ac.uk/opportunities/study/)

Cambridge Colleges visit [www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/colleges](http://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/colleges)

Cambridge Trust: [www.cambridgetrust.org](http://www.cambridgetrust.org)


Gates Cambridge Trust: [www.gatescambridge.org](http://www.gatescambridge.org)

Graduate admissions:

- Course directory: [www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses](http://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses)
- Department Directory: [www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses/departments](http://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses/departments)
- Finance overview: [www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/finance](http://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/finance)
- English language requirement testing: [www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/international-students/competence-english/will-i-have-language-requirement](http://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/international-students/competence-english/will-i-have-language-requirement)
- Graduate funding competition: [www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/finance/funding/graduate-funding-competition](http://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/finance/funding/graduate-funding-competition)
- Information on international qualifications: [www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/international-qualifications](http://www.graduate.study.cam.ac.uk/international-qualifications)

Graduate Union: [www.gradunion.cam.ac.uk](http://www.gradunion.cam.ac.uk/)

International student office: [www.ist.admin.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ist.admin.cam.ac.uk)

Student societies across the University: [www.societies.cam.ac.uk](http://www.societies.cam.ac.uk)

UK Government: driving with an international driver’s licence: [www.gov.uk/driving-nongb-licence](http://www.gov.uk/driving-nongb-licence)

UK National Recognition Information Centre: [www.naric.org.uk/naric/](http://www.naric.org.uk/naric/)

Undergraduate alternative prospectus: [www.applyto.cambridge.com/colleges](http://www.applyto.cambridge.com/colleges)

University accommodation search: [www.student-funding.cam.ac.uk/](http://www.student-funding.cam.ac.uk/)

University childcare services: [www.childcare.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.childcare.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us)

University Departments: [www.cam.ac.uk/colleges-and-departments/department-a-z](http://www.cam.ac.uk/colleges-and-departments/department-a-z)


University of Cambridge sport: [www.sport.cam.ac.uk/](http://www.sport.cam.ac.uk/)

University student funding search: [www.student-funding.cam.ac.uk/](http://www.student-funding.cam.ac.uk/)

University funded Studentships: [www.jobs.cam.ac.uk/job/?category=6](http://www.jobs.cam.ac.uk/job/?category=6)