THE CUSU SHADOWING SCHEME 2018: AN INTRODUCTION

The Shadowing Scheme, run by Cambridge University Students’ Union (CUSU) is aimed at talented, state-educated Year 12 students (S5 in Scotland, Year 13 in Northern Ireland) who are on track to achieve A*AA in their A levels (or equivalent) and have little family experience of university or great reservations about applying to Cambridge. The scheme is also open to mature students – those who will be 21 or over at the time they start their course at university.

During their three day visit (Thursday afternoon – Saturday morning), students ‘shadow’ a current undergraduate studying a subject in which they are interested. They accompany them to lectures, classes and supervisions (small group teaching) while staying in one of the Colleges that make up the University. Students are also encouraged to take part in social activities which make up a big part of life at Cambridge. Such activities include a quiz night, sports practices and movie night.

The Scheme also includes an admissions talk about applying to Cambridge, delivered by an Admissions Tutor so that students can leave confident and equipped with accurate information about applying to Cambridge.

Prior to arriving at Cambridge, shadow students are able to communicate with their undergraduate mentors using a secure e-mentoring system. For the students’ safety, only their first names are passed onto their mentors and all mentors undergo DBS checks and training.

The Scheme is extremely popular, having been running for 17 years. It has always received positive feedback from students with participants regularly commenting that the Scheme gave them the chance to really experience university life, and changed their perceptions of and attitude towards Cambridge and higher education.

The 2018 Shadowing Scheme will run on three sets of dates:

Thursday 18th – Saturday 20th January
Thursday 25th – Saturday 27th January
Thursday 1st – Saturday 3rd February

For Mature Students, the Shadowing Scheme will run Thursday November 9th – 11th 2017.

The three day long trip is funded by CUSU, the University, and the Colleges. All accommodation and food is free, and travel costs may be reimbursed by CUSU on a needs basis.
The online application form for the Shadowing Scheme, opened on GCSE Results Day - Thursday 24th August 2017 and must be completed by Friday 1st December 2017. Parents/guardians and nominated teachers must fill in their respective forms by the following week - Friday 8th December 2017.

The application form for the Mature Students’ strand of the Shadowing Scheme must be completed by Sunday October 15th 2017.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

COSTS

The Shadowing Scheme is funded by CUSU, the University of Cambridge and the Colleges. Accommodation and food are both free, as are any activities arranged by CUSU (although some other optional activities around town, such as watching student theatre, may require students to bring some money with them).

Transport must be arranged and paid for by participants, but travel costs may be reimbursed on a needs basis. CUSU would like to reimburse all travel costs, but due to limited funding we prioritise those for whom the expense of travelling to Cambridge could be a barrier to participation on the Scheme. Details of reimbursement opportunities will be distributed to selected applicants when they are notified of their acceptance to one of the Scheme weekends.

TRAVEL & SAFEGUARDING

It must be stressed that this is an unaccompanied trip. Although shadow students can expect to spend the vast majority of their time with their undergraduate mentor, or participating in group activities, there may be times when they are unaccompanied in the city, and they will be travelling on their own. CUSU trains and DBS checks all of the mentors, and while CUSU does everything possible to ensure the safety of the participants, it is not legally responsible for their welfare. Should you have any concerns about any participant’s safety, please review the Sample Programme of Events included in the student section below prior to recommending students, and/or please contact us directly.

It should also be noted that, due to the timing of the Scheme, participants will have to miss some days of school. By returning their forms in the application process, nominated teachers and parents/guardians give their consent to this.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The Shadowing Scheme is now in its eighteenth year. It exists to show high-achieving UK potential undergraduates what student life is like at the University of Cambridge. The Scheme itself is not
primarily about raising attainment, but instead about dispelling the myths and misconceptions surrounding Cambridge to show those who are already high achievers that were they to come to study here, they would fit in as well as anyone else.

Given the aims of the Scheme, it is targeted at students from schools and backgrounds progression onto higher education is not the norm. These are the students who are least likely to have the resources to find out about university life and so would benefit most from the Scheme.

To help you advise your students on whether to apply for the Scheme, some details of the selection criteria are set out briefly below. If you would like further information on these criteria please do not hesitate to contact us. Please note: we apply this selection method in preparation for a much higher volume of applications to the Scheme than we generally have places for; this has been the case in every year of the Scheme’s operation. We are unfortunately unable to give places to every student who applies, even if they match all criteria listed below.

FILTERS

These filters, generally speaking, would rule a student out of the Scheme altogether, although this is monitored and can be subject to exception:

- The three-part application is incomplete;
- The student would be younger than 16 by the start of the Shadowing Scheme;

The nominated teacher and parent/guardian must give consent in their forms or it will be assumed that consent is not given and the application will be considered incomplete. All students participating in the Shadowing Scheme must be at least 16 at the beginning of the Scheme.

- The student attended a private secondary school and/or sixth form college;
- A close family member has studied at Oxford or Cambridge;
- Both parents/guardians hold higher education qualifications;

Students in these situations are likely to have access to information regarding higher education, as well as being more likely to have received encouragement which will have instilled confidence in their abilities to proceed to higher education. They are therefore less in need of the Shadowing Scheme experience.

- Fewer than 8 GCSEs/equivalent
- Studying for fewer than 3 A Levels (/equivalent)

Scheme participants must have a demonstrable likelihood of being offered a place at Cambridge. Fewer than 8 GCSEs/equivalent will not give a broad enough picture to assess the applicant’s academic capability. The University makes undergraduate offers based on 3 A levels/equivalent.
• AS/A Level (or equivalent) subjects bar students from being able to apply for their two Shadowing Scheme subject choices.

Some undergraduate courses at Cambridge have prerequisite qualifications. The requirements for all Cambridge University undergraduate courses can be found on the Undergraduate Admissions website: http://www.study.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/

SCORING AND RANKING

After the filters have been applied to the applications we receive, we score and rank the remaining applications using a set of criteria to assess their relative merit (as far as reasonably practicable). We refer to official national demographic data, such as POLAR2 data, to be able to score particular factors. Applicants all start with 0 points, and accumulate points when they fulfil the criteria. The factors below are not weighted evenly (as some factors may be more important than others), and as above are intended only as an indication of the selection process:

• Each A*, A and B-graded GCSE/equivalent scores points for the applicant.
• Potential to achieve A*AA at A level (or equivalent) according to teacher.
• Neighbourhood in which few young people progress to higher education.
• Neighbourhood in which few adults are university-educated.
• No family or friends have attended university.
• Student eligible for free school meals.
• Parent/Guardian 1 has low level of education.
• Parent/Guardian 2 (if applicable) has low level of education.
• Secondary school has high proportion of students on free school meals.
• Secondary school has low GCSE average points score.
• Sixth form has low level of students applying to university.
• Sixth form has very low level of students applying to the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford.

This system is designed to rank applications according to both academic and widening participation criteria.

All applications are anonymised - every application is distinguishable by a randomised “Application ID” only - so that no inappropriate information about the candidate, for example name, gender, or religion, is able to form any part of the selection process. It should be emphasised that applying to the CUSU Shadowing Scheme will have absolutely no impact at all on a student’s potential future application to the University of Cambridge.
**WHAT IS THE SHADOWING SCHEME?**

The CUSU Shadowing Scheme brings UK students from schools without a tradition of top university entry to Cambridge for three days in January or February. The scheme is open to Year 12 (England and Wales)/ S5 (Scotland)/ Year 13 (NI) students. Prospective students come to Cambridge on the Thursday afternoon and stay until Saturday lunchtime. In that time you will spend time with a current undergraduate, studying a subject that you are interested in, who you 'shadow'.

As a ‘shadow’, you'll see everything students can get up to on a day-to-day basis: lectures, supervisions, getting involved with student societies, clubs and sports teams, socialising and so on. You will also be given a lot of information about the applications process by both students and Admissions Tutors.

For the last four years, the Scheme has been also open to mature student applicants, i.e. those who will be 21 or over at the time they start their course. Following the success of the scheme in previous years, we expect that this 'mature strand' will continue to take place and hopefully grow even bigger!

The idea is to give people with little or no experience of university a taste of student life at Cambridge, in real time, with real people. The Shadowing Scheme is specifically for students with little or no history of university in their family, students who have great reservations about applying to Cambridge or students whose school rarely sends students to University.

The whole trip is funded by CUSU, the University, and the Colleges – all accommodation and food is free, and travel costs to and from Cambridge may be reimbursed on a needs basis. The Scheme is really competitive; we receive more applications than places. As such, we ask that standard-age applicants are on track to achieve As and A*s in your A-Levels (or equivalent.)

If you already know that you want to apply to Cambridge or Oxford, or you have friends or relatives who have studied at Cambridge or Oxford, please come on an Open Day or other Cambridge scheme for which you are eligible instead.

The 2018 Shadowing Scheme will run on three sets of dates:

- **Thursday 18th – Saturday 20th January**
- **Thursday 25th – Saturday 27th January**
- **Thursday 1st – Saturday 3rd February**

For Mature Students, the Shadowing Scheme will run **Thursday November 9th – 11th 2017**.

If you have any questions about the Shadowing Scheme, please contact the CUSU Access Officer via shadowingscheme@cusu.cam.ac.uk
Check out the [CUSU Access Officer Twitter account](https://twitter.com) and [CUSU Shadowing Scheme Facebook page](https://facebook.com) for updates.

### SAMPLE PROGRAMME

#### THURSDAY

**MORNING**

Travel to Cambridge

**AFTERNOON**

Meet CUSU Access Officer and other shadows at Welcome Session

Meet undergraduate mentor

Walk back to College, find room and collect meal vouchers

Go on a tour of College

**EVENING**

Welcome meal with other shadows

Discuss plans for the next day with mentor

Meet with mentor’s friends/other shadows

Catch a late show at the student-run ADC theatre

#### FRIDAY

**MORNING**

Breakfast in College

Go to a lecture

Look around the lecture site and libraries

Go into Cambridge and look around the city

Go to a careers talk, or subject-related activity

**AFTERNOON**
Lunch in College
Attend a supervision or practical session with mentor
Try your hand at journalism in a student-newspaper-run workshop

**EVENING**
Try out different sports or another society’s activities
Dinner in college with mentor
Go to a comedy night and hang out with your mentor
Go back to your room and sleep!

**SATURDAY**

**MORNING**
Breakfast in college
Say goodbye to mentor and students you’ve met
Attend exist session (includes an admissions talk from a College Admissions Tutor)
Fill in feedback forms and hand in travel expenses forms
Travel back home

**PRACTICAL INFORMATION**

**APPLYING**
Applications are submitted through a three-part online form, which opened on Thursday 24th August 2017. The student form must be completed by you (the student) by Friday 1st December 2017 at the latest. Your parent(s)/guardian(s) and nominated teacher must fill in their forms by the following Friday 8th December 2017.

The application form for the Mature Students’ strand of the Shadowing Scheme must be completed by Sunday October 15th 2017.

**TRAVEL**
You will have to make your own way to and from Cambridge (or get someone to drive you straight to the first venue!) If you arrive by train or coach, we will meet you at the train station or provide you
with directions from the coach drop off point (a five minute easy walk), and guide you to the first venue where the Welcome Session will take place. After this, you will be with your mentor – Cambridge is so small that you won’t really need money for travel except a bus from the town centre to the station on the last day if you are travelling home by train.

**MONEY**

We don’t want money to be an object to your participation in the Shadowing Scheme. All your food in college and accommodation will be free for the duration of the Scheme, and we will refund travel on a needs basis. Activities will either be free or cheap (with discounts on several popular Cambridge activities).

**WILL I FIT IN?**

The Scheme aims to show you the real Cambridge and break down myths that all students at Cambridge are posh and super-geniuses – by coming on the Scheme, you get to see for yourself that this isn’t true! All of the Cambridge students taking part as mentors in the Shadowing Scheme are eager to show you around, make the experience enjoyable, and help you learn about what studying at the University is like. You’ll be put in contact with your mentor in advance of the Scheme through a secure online e-mentoring programme, so you can get to know them and ask any questions you have before arriving. You’ll also get to stay in contact with them afterwards – quite a few of the 2017 participants are still in touch with their mentors now, months after they came on the Scheme!

Shadow students come on the Scheme from all over the UK, but they’ve all been chosen because they’re academically capable and from a background where they’re unlikely to know much about what going to university is like. You shouldn’t feel intimidated about who you’ll meet – we know from feedback that shadows find the Scheme great fun, and usually don’t want to leave at the end of it.