



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

HISTORY OF ART ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT

CONTENT SPECIFICATION

The Department of History of Art admissions assessment will be taken by all applicants invited for interview in a open book situation at home approximately one week before interview. The assessment format will be a one-hour written assessment within a 90-minute window in which candidates will be asked to comment on two pairs of images of works of art, which they will be able to select from five possible pairs they will be offered.

Asking candidates to discuss works of art in this way is not just an essential means of assessing their visual acumen and intelligence; it also corresponds to the way that almost 50 per cent of the History of Art Tripos is currently examined, and thus provides a good indication of their likely ability to succeed in the Cambridge course.

Some low-resolution examples of typical pairings of the type that could be used are appended to this document.

The criteria that will be used to grade applicants' responses are likely to include the following three broad sections:

1. observation and description of the works under consideration, in general and in detail;
2. analysis of the works, internally and by reference to any external factors that may occur to the candidate;
3. comparison of the two works in each chosen pair, and any ideas suggested by the juxtaposition.

For the interview itself different Colleges will continue to practice their own methods, within the envelope of the standard interview format. Additional visual analysis (carried out verbally) or a written assessment of some sort may form part of that process.

The results of the admissions assessment will only form only one part of the admissions process for History of Art. The candidate's existing and predicted school examination results, personal statement, reference and performance in other areas of the interview will all continue to be equally important aspects of the whole process.

FAQs

Q: As the History of Art test is to be taken shortly before interview, will there be no deselection in the subject?

A: No, History of Art will continue its current practice of deselecting those few candidates who, on the basis of their whole UCAS application, do not appear to stand any realistic chance of gaining an offer even were they to have taken the admissions assessment.

Q: I have not had the opportunity of studying art history at my school. Will I be disadvantaged by this test by comparison with those applicants who have?

A: No, because what is being assessed in this part of the application process is visual acumen and intelligence, not pre-existing knowledge, and the images offered are unlikely to be familiar to any candidate. Only in the case of context is it possible that applicants studying art history at school might have more to say, but we will assess that part of the response bearing this advantage in mind when we pair the test results up afterwards with the candidates' school profiles.

Q: Can I write my responses in a language other than English?

A: No. A high level of competence in the English language is essential for success in any degree course in Cambridge. Essay writing is a constant means by which we teach and students learn – and a high percentage of the History of Art Tripos is based on unseen written examinations.

Q: Will all candidates being interviewed be offered the same selection of five pairs of images from which to choose two?

A: Yes, all candidates taking the assessment will be offered the same selection of five pairs of images from which to choose two.











