HUMAN SCIENCES ADMISSIONS SUMMARY REPORT 2024–25

1.   ADMISSIONS STATISTICS

1.1   Number of Applicants

There were 167 applicants. Of these 159 sat the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) test which is a compulsory part of the admissions process.

1.2   Number of applicants per place

A total of 36 offers were made (including open offers) making a ratio of 4.6 applicants per place.

1.3   Breakdown of offers by open applicants, deferred entry gender and domicile

There were 25 open applicants.

There were 166 applicants for entry in 2025 and 1 applicant for entry in in 2026.

There were 37 male applicants (who identify as a man) and 126 female applicants (who identify as a woman) with 4 applicants who use another term or prefer not to say.

1.4   Number of applicants shortlisted

104 applicants were shortlisted for interview.

1.5   Number of applicants made offers

36 applicants were made offers (including 5 applicants who were made open offers)

2.   ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES

2.1   Shortlisting Procedures

2.1.1   Selection Criteria

The interview process and selection criteria for Human Sciences are set out on the Human Sciences website at https://www.ihs.ox.ac.uk/apply-study-here

2.1.2   Procedure for Shortlisting

Shortlisting was performed in accordance with the stated admissions criteria, and taking into account available and relevant data; in particular these data included an applicant's score from the TSA, the candidate's contextualised GCSE score, all aspects of the applicant's UCAS form and any further information specific to the applicant.

The TSA score and contextualised GCSE score, where applicable, were combined to provide a pre-interview score on which candidates were ranked. A threshold based on the number of places available was calculated and those above the threshold in the ranking, and whose predicted or obtained A levels or equivalent grades met the requirement for the course and who had satisfactory previous qualifications, were shortlisted. A number of candidates below the threshold who had exceptional circumstances were also short-listed, resulting in around 3 short-listed applicants per place.

A meeting of tutors from all colleges offering places for Human Sciences was held to discuss short-listing decisions in the light of all information available to ensure that short-listing decision were

applied consistently across all colleges. At this meeting short-listing decisions for candidates were agreed and these decisions were entered onto the web-based admissions database.

Each applicant had a first assigned college, which was either the college to which they had applied or, in the case of open applicants, a college randomly selected by the Admissions Office in such a way as to even-out competition for places. In cases where a college was particularly over-subscribed, colleges were asked to reallocate some of their candidates after short-listing. These candidates were then assigned to the colleges which were under-subscribed. In 2024-25, twenty applicants were reallocated to a different first choice college.

2.1.3 Weighting of TSA and Contextualised GCSE Scores

For candidates with a contextualised GCSCE score, the TSA and contextualised GCSE score were given equal weight in the pre-interview score. For candidates without a contextualised GCSE score, the Pre-interview score was based solely on the TSA score.

2.1.4. Statistics on short-listed candidates

The average number of GCSEs amongst short-listed candidates was 9.7 (compared with 9.8 in 2023-24 and 9.7 in 2022-23) and the average number of GCSEs at 9/8/A* amongst shortlisted candidates was 8.1 (compared with 8.8 in 2023-24 and 8.6 in 2022-23). Amongst all candidates, the average number of GCESs was 9.6 (compared with 9.5 in 2023-24 and 2022-23) and the average number of GCSEs at 9/8/A* was 7.3 (compared with 7.6 in 2023-24 and 8 in 2022-23).

Of the 104 shortlisted candidates 72 were taking (or had taken) A-levels (compared with 67 out of 95 in 2023-24) and of these 65 (or 90.3%) were taking (or had taken) Biology (compared with 59 or 88.1% in 2023-24 and 48 or 84.2% in 2022-23). 32 (or 44.4%) were taking (or had taken) A level Maths.

2.2 Interview Process

2.2.1 Description of Interview Process

All short-listed candidates were interviewed in early December. The interview dates by subject are readily available on the Admissions Office webpage in advance.

All interviews took place remotely on Microsoft Teams.

2.2.2 Number of Interviews at 1st Colleges

There were 104 first college interviews.

2.2.3 Number of 2nd College interviews including second college allocation process

There were 104 interviews at 2nd colleges. Each short-listed candidate was randomly assigned a second college by an algorithm so as to equalise across colleges the interview load per place ratio.

2.2.4 Descriptors of Interview Scoring used

Interviews are academic in nature. An applicant's performance was judged according to the admissions criteria. The interviews were graded on a scale of 1–20 against descriptors as follows:

20	Truly exceptional	(A++)	78+
	A candidate such as only rarely encountered		
19	Outstanding	(A+)	72-77
	Unambiguously first class		
17-18	Excellent	(A)	68-72
	Clear suggestions of first class potential: highly competent in response to tests; highly articulate; relevant knowledge going beyond what one might expect; thoughtful and insightful in discussion, taking the conversation further than the norm		
14-16	Very good	(AB)	63-67
	Clearly capable of gaining a 2.1 degree: competent in response to tests; articulate; sound relevant knowledge; enthusiastic about Human Sciences		
12-13	Competent	(B)	58-62
	Competent overall, but some suggestion of weakness: some inaccuracies or difficulty in response to tests or in discussion of relevant issues; gaps in relevant knowledge; some lack of enthusiasm for the subject		
10-11	Borderline acceptance	(BC)	54-57
	Signs of potential, but also clear signs of weakness: inaccuracies or difficulty in response to tests or in discussion of relevant issues; not as articulate as tutorial discussion generally requires; gaps in relevant knowledge; lack of enthusiasm for the subject		
8-9	Weak	(C)	48-53
	Too weak to consider for a place: failures in the tests; failure to sustain a discussion; worrying gaps in relevant knowledge; lack of enthusiasm for the subject		
4-7	Very weak		21-47
	As above, but to a greater degree		
0-3	Exceptionally weak		0-20
	Failure to navigate the tests and sustain a discussion; unacceptable gaps in basic knowledge; unenthusiastic		

2.2.5 Procedures for Final Decision Making including Final Admissions Meeting

The Institute of Human Sciences operates various procedures in a co-ordinated effort to ensure that the strongest applicants are offered places irrespective of college choice. These include transparency of all test results, interview grades and UCAS forms amongst all tutors involved in admissions, and a meeting of college tutors at which places awarded are collectively agreed. At the meeting the strongest unplaced candidates were discussed and twelve were selected for a panel interview.

A panel comprising three college lead interviewers for Human Sciences interviewed these candidates and five of those interviewed by the panel were made open offers.

3. Pre-Interview Admissions Test: The Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) Test

3.1 When and how the test results are available

The TSA results are automatically distributed to all applicants shortly after decision letters are sent in January.

3.2 The average performance of candidates

The average TSA score in 2024 was:

58.0 (out of 100) amongst all candidates (compared with 56.7 in 2023 and 61.0 in 2022)
63.0 (out of 100) amongst shortlisted candidates (compared with 60.3 in 2023 and 65.9 in 2022)
63.5 (out of 100) amongst applicants who were made offers (compared with 61.5 in 2023 and 73.9 in 2022)

For the problem solving questions the average score was:

23.6 (out of 50) amongst all candidates
26.0 (out of 50) amongst shortlisted candidates
25.8 (out of 50) amongst candidates who were made offers

For the critical thinking questions the average score was:

34.4 (out of 50) amongst all candidates
37.1 (out of 50) amongst shortlisted candidates
37.8 (out of 50) amongst shortlisted candidates

Distribution of TSA Scores