Churchill College
Alternative Prospectus
Produced by Churchill JCR

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Welcome to Churchill

So you’re thinking about applying to Cambridge? Not really sure about which college to pick – or what colleges even are? Don’t worry, this prospectus is here to help!

Let’s start with the basics: what is a college? Essentially, at Cambridge, a college does many things. It provides you with accommodation, places to eat and study, people to go to for help if you have a problem (either academic or personal), and it organizes your subject supervisions (small group teaching sessions that are a vital part of the Cambridge style of teaching). But most importantly, it is where you’ll meet many of your friends at university and where you’ll have some of the best times of your three (or four) years at Cambridge!

Colleges also have what’s known as a JCR Committee. This is a group of undergraduates who represent the student body, and who have a range of responsibilities, from maintaining the JCR website, to helping provide welfare support for students, to helping make college as environmentally friendly as possible. The JCR President represents the views of undergraduates to those in charge of running the college, whilst the JCR Access Officer also helps encourage people from a range of backgrounds to apply to Churchill. The Committee plays a big role in helping students settle in during their first few weeks.

So what about Churchill? Well, Churchill is one of the more modern colleges in Cambridge: it was built in the 1950s, and opened in October 1960. It was originally intended that most students would be science students. Although science students are still in the majority, there are many friendly arts students here too. At Churchill, you can study for any degree that Cambridge offers, with the exception of Land Economy and Theology.

Churchill is in many ways the opposite of what people think of when they think of the Cambridge stereotype: we don’t have to wear long black gowns to dinner, and we can walk, run, jump and do handstands on the grass. We have all the fantastic facilities and educational advantages of a Cambridge college, but without some of the more archaic rules and regulations.

Furthermore, Churchill has the space to house all undergraduates on the same campus for the first 3 years of their degrees, unlike many more central colleges, which means that you get to know people from all years and all subject groups. This helps to create a sense of community and means you are never far away from your friends and all the facilities of college.
Churchill is a 20 minute walk or a 10 minute cycle ride from the town centre. This does have its advantages, as it means that you won’t be plagued by tourists when you are trying to meet that essay deadline (and the extra exercise keeps Churchill students among the fittest in the University).

On site facilities include squash courts, tennis courts, netball courts, a gym and large sports fields for rugby, football or even frisbee. If you’re not the sporty type, there is a games room, a television room with Sky, on-site music facilities, and a well-used bar area. The bar is also the location of PAV, our free weekly disco where no one will judge you on the quality of your dancing or worrying enthusiasm for cheesy music!

From an academic perspective, we have well stocked science and arts libraries. Inside the library and around most of the communal areas in college there is wireless internet connection. We also have computer rooms complete with photocopiers and printers for use by any College member.

So if you’re looking for a college with fun and friendly people, with a fantastic academic record, lovely grounds, excellent music, theatre and sports facilities, no daft traditional rules, and a place where you can enjoy the best three or four years of your life, then Churchill is the perfect place for you.
Typical Days

So what is it actually like to study here? Whether you are interested in an arts or a science subject, read on to find out what a typical day is like here in Cambridge.

A day in the life of an Arts student

8.30-9.30 am: Alarm goes off…alarm is put onto snooze…alarm goes off again… until you finally get up (this is assuming you’ve not been lured into the boat club: then set the time 2 hours earlier and include a cycle to the boathouse and an ‘outing’ (a row on the Cam) in between).

9:45 am: Leave College for your first lecture (if you’re cycling that is – there’s also the option of the bus or walking, but both would require you to leave a little earlier). Hopefully it’ll be warm and dry, and you’ll be able to cycle down with your friends to your first lecture of the day.

10 am: 1st lecture-starting between now and ten past depending on the lecturer, but it’ll be full (at least in the first few weeks). Most lecturers give out a handout before the lecture, and then put their Powerpoint slides on the internet afterwards in case you missed something in the lecture.

11 am-12.30 pm: Doing a bit of reading in the faculty library or University Library for the next essay or chatting with friends!

12.30-2.00 pm: Lunch – somewhere in town or in hall at college is normally the case for artists, as many of the faculties are situated in a central location.

2.00-3.00 pm: Another lecture filled with the same people that you probably saw in the morning.

3.30- 4.30 pm; You have an average of about two supervisions a week so this may be the time at which you have the supervision.

4.30-6.00 pm: An afternoon nap!!......More productively you could use this time do some work, whether it be reading for or writing your next essay, or doing some research. Alternatively, this is a common time for sports clubs to have their training sessions.

6.00-7.00 pm: Dinner time!!

7.00-9.00 pm: Maybe a bit more work depending upon how close the essay / project deadline is. If there isn’t a deadline approaching, then this time is free too! If you’re musical, you might have a choir or orchestra rehearsal.

9.00 pm onwards: Socialising in the bar or going out into town until the eyelids get heavy and you know it’s time for bed.
Sciences
7:30-8.00am: Alarm going off, alarm is put on snooze, and so on, until you finally get up (this is assuming you've not been lured into the boat club: then set the time an hour earlier and include a cycle to the boathouse and an outing on the Cam in between)

8:45 am: Leave College if you're cycling (there's also the option of the bus or walking, but both would require you to leave much earlier). Hopefully it'll be a dry, speedy cycle down with your friends to your 9am.

9 am-1 pm: Lecture slots (most likely only 2 or 3 slots will be filled). Lectures start between the hour and ten past depending on the lecturer, but they will often be full so if you get there late, be warned you could be sitting on the floor. If you don't go you will need to copy up the notes.

1-2 pm: Lunch—somewhere in town or a quick cycle ride back to college is normally the case for scientists, although it might be cut short if you have a practical to get back too.

2-6 pm: Now is the time to do all that supervision work – If you haven't got labs, that is. It's also the perfect time for an hour or so of sport to help break up the day.

6-7 pm: Eating in hall, cooking, or going out to a formal dinner at another college.

7 pm-late: Hopefully with friends out somewhere, or relaxing in college, although some nights you'll be working late to get that essay done before the supervision tomorrow!

First year timetables

Natural Sciences: Have different lectures depending on the subject, lectures are as above for 6 days a week, (yes, Saturday 9am lectures do exist, all I can say is you get used to them after a while). There are 4 supervisions a week, each lasting about 1 hour. They are in groups of 2 or 3. Your practical timetable depends on the options you pick.

Computer sciences: You do the Natural Sciences maths course and one other Natural Sciences course, as well as 2 computer science courses. You spend about the same amount of time in labs.

Engineering: You will have the same structure of lectures in the mornings but only Monday to Friday, with one hour of labs and a four hour drawing / computing session per week, plus 2 one hour supervisions per week.

Mathematics: You will have 2 hours of lectures in the morning, six days a week, but no practicals. There are 2 supervisions a week.

Medicine: You will have 2 hours of dissection twice a week, 2 hours of physiology practicals every week and 2 hours of histology every fortnight, plus a few random other ones. Lectures are generally in the mornings, and you will have 3 supervisions a week.
Around College

Rooms
Rooms are arranged around a staircase, with 10-20 or so rooms to a staircase. The rooms are all fairly similar, with wooden floors and a sink. Most rooms have a window seat, which is great for sitting and watching the world go by. Some rooms are en-suite. Churchill lets you pick a room to suit your needs and budget; rooms are allocated by a ballot system. The nice thing about Churchill is that all undergraduates are guaranteed a room in college for the first three years of their degree (which for most people is their entire degree). Some other colleges aren’t big enough to accommodate all students within the main college site, so some students live in hostels or college-owned houses a big distance from college. On each staircase there is kitchen with a cooker, fridge, freezer and microwave, along with plenty of showers and a bath for those who don’t have en-suite. All rooms have free internet access (up to 1GB per day). Rents vary from around £520-£991 (2008-09) per term.

Library
Here at Churchill there are 2 libraries, a science and an arts one. The arts library also comes complete with comfy chairs for working on (and also allegedly one of Winston Churchill’s old chairs). Most books can be borrowed for 1 or 2 weeks. The librarian is really good at getting books ordered that are needed for your course, if they’re missing from the library.

The libraries are open all day, every day, with access via a swipe card, so you can work at whatever time suits you best.

Hall
Churchill offers a self-service breakfast, lunch and dinner. Hall times are normally pretty busy, so it’s pretty sociable and a great place to see and spend time with friends. You can get a main meal for about £3.

On Tuesday and Thursday nights, Formal Hall is available in hall and on Friday nights there is Superhall (which is also a formal hall). Formal hall is a chance to get dressed up and have a three-course meal with your friends, for a very reasonable price (£8.50).
Bar

The bar is a key part of the social life at Churchill, as it is a good place to socialize during the day and the evening (and possibly well into the night…). The actual counter of the bar isn't always open but when it is the prices are good and the handiness is unbeatable (it also sells a variety of snacks). In addition, there are vending machines for those late night sugar cravings, and a selection of newspapers and magazines. In the evening there are sometimes bar quizzes, and major sporting events can be screened on a projector.

Situated next to the bar is the Fairtrade shop, which sells a wide range of food and snacks (all of which are Fairtrade, surprisingly). Finally, a juke box and dartboard complete the array of facilities on offer.

TV Room

Although the bar has a projector in it, at Churchill we also have our very own TV room, complete with plasma screen TV. We have terrestrial and Sky Sports channels so there is always something to watch. Whether you fancy a good old documentary, football, MTV base or Big Brother, the TV room is definitely a good place to be. There are committed telly addicts in college and, of course, the room gets very busy when football or rugby matches are on!

Games Room

Believe it or not, the cunningly named Games Room is where the arcade games and pool table are to be found.

Wolfson Hall

Host to film nights and student plays throughout the year, it has a large stage, screen and tiered seating.

PC Room

The PC rooms are well equipped, with around 10 computers in each, and a fast laser printer. One is conveniently situated next to the library; the other is near to the bar and looks out past the Hepworth statue onto the fields.
Make the most of that freedom and indulge your interests. There is a vast array of societies on offer but if you’re an obscure ‘indefinable’ type you can always create your own. Uni-wide societies may be more diverse but here’s a quick summary of what you can get up to without leaving Churchill.

**Sports**

The take-home message here is that players of any ability will find a niche for themselves somewhere!

**Football:** Churchill College FC has 3 men’s teams which represent a range of talent and abilities, but equal amounts of enjoyment. Some people play as they figure that if the whole Uni thing doesn’t work out, then a footy career may be on the cards; others play just to have fun. There is also an excellent ladies team in Churchill, which currently plays in the top division, but where nothing is taken too seriously. It’s a chance for the women in college to show off their skills or simply run around on the grass wearing pink! At the end of summer term, there is also a massive five-a-side tournament. “Training” constitutes a kick about once a week to keep the team spirit going. Everyone is welcome and it’s a nice way to socialize and get some exercise.

**Rugby:** We welcome rugby players of all abilities: our members range from university standard to those that have never previously held a rugby ball. There is a strong Churchill team spirit that makes all aspects, including training, matches and the social scene, a highly enjoyable experience. Having our pitches on the college grounds is a great advantage to the club, which enjoys consistently impressive (albeit slightly weather dependent) support, as well as frequent attendance by our very own college mascot, ‘Winstonson’. Last, but certainly not least, if there was just one reason to represent Churchill Rugby then the social calendar is undoubtedly it. The infamous ‘HATS nights’ are ones not to forget (or quite the opposite in some cases!), where all members of the club join together for a night out on the town, wearing a hat (obviously). There is also an active girls’ rugby team in college, which normally play sevens. New players are welcomed. We regularly have matches against other colleges and compete in the women's league.

**Boat Club:** Rowing is a big sport in Churchill and throughout the University. Lots of students try it at some point during their degree, even if it is just for the novelty! However rowers are among the fittest people in college and have a great social life too. Everyone starts in Novice crews. These are formed within the first couple of weeks of term, and are where you are taught the basics by (allegedly) experienced rowers! Each term culminates in a huge formal dinner with lots of posh food and wine! Finally, you can’t talk about rowing at Cambridge without talking about “the bumps”, which take place at the end of Lent (second) and Easter (third) terms. On each day, crews from all colleges are lined up along the river Cam and at the firing of a cannon, charge up the river in an effort to literally crash into the boat in front without being caught by the boat behind.
**Squash:** Churchill has 4 courts, more than any other college in Cambridge, and they are all on site! With this, there is a buzzing squash scene at Churchill, with many players of all abilities, from absolute beginners to University standard. For the absolute beginners and those looking to touch up their game, we have free squash coaching. For the casual players, we have squash leagues for all abilities. For those with the competitive drive, we have both men's and women's squash teams who play against other colleges throughout the year and in the yearly 'Cuppers' Tournament. Finally, and most importantly, our squash courts are amongst the warmest courts in winter, which (you'll have to take my word for) is the most important reason to come to Churchill!

**Ultimate frisbee:** Churchill College’s Ultimate Frisbee team has grown from its foundation in 2004 by Churchill frisbee legend Yoz, to one of the biggest (if not the biggest!) teams in the University. For those not yet in the know, Ultimate Frisbee is a team sport that falls somewhere between American Football and Netball: points are given for catching the Frisbee in the endzone, and players can’t run when holding the disc. It’s very easy to learn, and great fun to play for all levels, so much so that you might not even notice that you’re getting fit as well! Skill levels run from the first team (‘Chillis’), who won the inter-college league and Cuppers in 2008, to general chuckabouts on the fields with friends, and everything in between! Practices are usually twice a week, with matches on Saturdays. One of the most popular sports for freshers to take up, the number of competitive teams depends on how many players we have each year. Check out [www.societies.chu.cam.ac.uk/societies/frisbee/](http://www.societies.chu.cam.ac.uk/societies/frisbee/) if you are interested.

**Societies**

**Art:** Make use of the art-studio and get to know Churchill’s artist in residence. ‘Express yourself’ and take out those academic frustrations. Art exhibitions arranged by the society’s president.

**CD Library:** Quite a simple idea really. Pay a few quid, borrow CDs for the rest of the term. So you can enjoy a wide variety of music.

**The Chapel Choir:** leads the congregational hymns at the chapel every week. Once a term we sing a full choral Evensong, and sometimes we join together with other chapel choirs for a joint evensong, which is always fun and provides a great chance to sing some different music and meet other singers. We also attend formal with the Fellows (academics) once a term. Highlights of the year are the Advent Carol Service at the end of November, and the Passiontide service before Easter, which give us the chance to sing some wonderful music by Rachmaninov, Berlioz, Stainer and Goodall, to name but a few.

**Christian Union:** Churchill has a large and vibrant CU which is committed to supporting all Christians in college. The CU is part of the Cambridge Intercollegiate Christian Union (CICCU). We meet on a Wednesday night to study the Bible in groups, followed by a time of prayer and praise together. During the week we also meet in prayer triplets and for late night worship.

**GODS:** Nope, not a breakaway Christian Union or the polytheism society. It’s actually the drama society. Responsible for the freshers’ play performed every year. Other productions happen throughout the year, and it’s generally a successful society for thespians and arty-types.
**Music Society:** We are one of the college’s largest and most inclusive societies, drawing our membership from students and staff at Churchill who share a common interest in music. The society regularly stages concerts in our purpose built Music Centre which was opened in 2007 and is one of the best music facilities in Cambridge! The **Churchill Choir** is the central ensemble of the society and it enjoys singing a varied (and sometimes completely random) mix of music. Repertoire has included medleys of Disney songs, James Bond themes, ABBA tunes and Broadway hits as well as works by Cole Porter, Mozart, Gershwin, Bach and Vivaldi. Termly concerts are always extremely popular, and we have a lot of fun preparing for them. We also perform at the college Garden Party at the end of the summer term. We like to give everyone the opportunity to conduct the choir, and many students have seized the opportunity to learn to conduct in a friendly atmosphere.

The Music Society also hosts concerts given by visiting professionals and in addition, liaises with other music societies to organise larger ensembles such as the **Orchestra on the Hill** which Churchill musicians play a big part in. There are many other music groups at Churchill ranging from sacred music groups to rock bands and the Music Centre is kitted out for these ensembles with various amps, a drum kit and other electronic and acoustic instruments including a grand piano and harpsichord. Recording equipment for the Music Centre’s studio is also coming soon! Music at Churchill is well supported by the College and instrumental and vocal bursaries are available to any Churchill student who is keen to take part in ensembles and concerts.

**Poker:** The Churchill Regular Association for Poker meets regularly on Sunday evenings for a fun laid-back game of poker. We pride ourselves on not taking it too seriously and do not gamble away our student loans. If you have never played poker before, there is no better place to learn, in close proximity to the bar. This year we have started playing inter college matches, and hope to build on this next year.

**The Phoenix Society:** regularly invites interesting and inspiring speakers to College to talk on a diverse range of subjects, from poetry to physics and terrorism to technology. Talks are usually held in the evenings, three times a term and are followed by a group table in formal hall. Past guests have included the former Lord Mayor of London, eminent physicists and Margaret Thatcher’s press secretary. The society is free to all members of the college and drinks are provided before all talks.
Churchill, being the best Cambridge college, is also the only college that offers a free, weekly ‘ent’ (a horrible word but used a lot here; it basically equates to late night music and dancing) that is open to everyone: PAV! We even have a regular chip-van outside at the end of Pav to ensure that no-one goes to bed hungry…….that is assuming that you’ll go straight to bed after Pav ;).

The main Pav area is in the bar (oh yes, there is more than one area), which on Friday evenings is converted to a shrine to cheesy music. We even have podiums, cunningly disguised as heaters during the rest of the week!

Every week the Ents Officers decide on a theme for Pav. Previous themes have included school uniform, beach, pilots and air hostesses, and a controversial censorship Pav. Whether you want to spend a week planning and constructing your outfit or just turn up in jeans and a top it really doesn’t matter, the theme is only there if you want to bother. When the music starts no-one notices anyway!!

Churchill Café
The café is a haven of rest amidst the stresses of work; a dispenser of free tea, coffee, hot chocolate and cheese toasties every Thursday evening. This was set up and is run by Christians in college, and is a great place to come and have a quiet chat, or to take a break from your weekly essay crisis. It is open to (and used by) everyone, regardless of their religious beliefs.

Bar Quiz
Held once or twice a term by our entsmaster and welfare team, this is a quiz that takes place in the bar…funnily enough. This is a good chance to catch up with friends over a pint as well as attempt to answer the impossible / random questions that are thrown at you, or alternatively show off your general knowledge to your mates.
Freshers' week
The college system at Cambridge means that you get very well looked after during your time here. There is a real sense of community with everyone looking out for you, from your mates (with whom you get to live with onsite for all the years that you are here), to your tutor, to the porters (who never let you forget your drunken Pav-night mishaps!), and your lovely welfare officers, who are responsible for organizing Fresher's week.

We have both a Women's and a Men's Welfare Officer at Churchill (unlike many of the other colleges). They are the friendly and approachable guys who welcome you by organizing the parenting scheme (where freshers are matched up with second and third years, who will keep an eye out for you in Fresher's Week, and generally offer you pearls of wisdom throughout your first year) and Fresher's Week. They are then on hand for coffee / tea, advice and chats anytime throughout the year. They sit on the JCR committee and liaise with college and the wider university (specifically CUSU) to ensure that you are fully aware of the support available to you (such as counseling services, financial bursaries, various helplines and welfare related talks/events). They are also discreet and speedy providers of condoms and pregnancy testing kits.

Spring Ball
Churchill hosts an annual ball in February, where the whole of college is transformed for a black tie event. It is an amazing evening, with great food and drink, and a wide range of entertainment. This year's event featured Nine Black Alps and a DJ set from Foals.

Film Nights
Our welfare team regularly put on a whole host of both modern and classic films at the Wolfson Hall. There is a wide choice of genres available to suit every taste from 'When Harry met Sally' to 'Sin City' and from 'Superbad' to "The Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind". This is the place where comedy meets horror, meets action thriller, meets documentary, meets you.

Garden Party
Whilst other colleges are organising their balls during May Week (the very last week of term in the summer, after everyone's exams have finished) , we have our very own free Garden Party, organised and run by the JCR Committee. It's an opportunity to chill out during the madness of May Week, sit on the beautiful Churchill grass, eat burgers, drink beer and listen to some musical talent from various Churchill bands and DJs. Or if you have a bit more energy to spare, there are generally some childish (yet amazing) amusements, such as huge chicken suits, bouncy castles, or fun games.

Winston
The free fortnightly college magazine and a fantastic source of 'cryptically' published college gossip. If you're interested in journalism or enjoy writing then it's easy to become involved.
Environment and Ethics

Here at Churchill, students’ Environmental and Ethical concerns are dealt with by a dedicated member of the JCR committee. We were one of the first colleges to create such a position, and are proud to have a long-standing reputation for taking these issues seriously. There’s an absolutely fantastic level of enthusiasm among students and staff alike regarding Green issues, which make the recycling scheme and other projects such successes! Clearly, there are always loads of activities to get involved with!

Fairtrade shop
Churchill College Fairtrade Shop was set up around three years ago, and is managed by students. We’ve recently changed suppliers so every single item sold is Fairtrade, rather than being simply organic (which was no bad thing anyway!). We sell lots of tasty products, ranging from the essentials in life, like teabags and pasta, to little luxuries like chocolate and peanut butter. At Churchill, you only need to start stuffing your face to be making a difference!

Charity Fundraising
There are always lots of fundraising events going on in Churchill. These can be organized by the college representatives of RAG (a nationwide student organization that fundraises for specific charities), the JCR E&E Officer or just a group of students with a specific interest in a charity. Have a charity that you’re particularly fond of that’s been missed off? No problem! We encourage students to work with the JCR E&E officer to plan events for any and all charities that they’re interested in. Events include a fashion show in which only clothes from charity shops were modelled, in aid of Labour Behind the Label, and a screening of a Bollywood film for the benefit of Wake Up Pune, a small HIV/AIDS charity based in Pune, India.

Amnesty International
Interested in human rights? Amnesty International is well represented both at Churchill, and within the University. Every Sunday we sit in the bar and write letters to figures of authority, expressing our concern over human rights abuses and pressuring governments to respect the rights and freedoms to which all humans should be entitled. We also hold comedy events (known as Smokers) in order to raise funds for Amnesty as well as raise awareness of specific campaigns.
Finance

Money
No one should be put off from going into higher education by financial worries. Between the government, Churchill and the university as a whole there are loads of bursaries grants and scholarships that will keep you afloat.

Government
Student Maintenance Loans:
In addition to the student loan for fees you will be able to take out a student maintenance loan to cover your living costs, 25% of which is means-tested. As a guide, in 2008–09 the maximum amount that can be borrowed by students living away from home is £4,625. The amount you receive depends on whether you study in London or not, whether you live at home and your household income. The money you borrow will have to be paid back in installments, but not until you have graduated and are earning a minimum salary determined by the government (currently £15,000 per year).

Maintenance Grants:
Since 2006, new full-time students from lower-income households have been eligible for a non-repayable maintenance grant (up to £2,906 in 2009–10). The amount you will receive is dependent on your family’s income, assessed by your Local Authority or award agency. (Receipt of a maintenance grant will reduce the size of student loan you can receive: details are available on the student finance website: www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/index.htm)

Newton trust
This is a university wide bursary which is easy to apply for and will help to relieve financial worries. The Cambridge bursaries will be worth up to £9,450 spread over three years or £12,600 over four years. The value of each bursary will be based on parental income, and calculated on a sliding scale up to a maximum of £3,150 per year in 2008-09. The Bursary Scheme and the maximum value of the bursaries awarded will be reviewed each year. Visit the bursary calculator!
http://www.newtontrust.cam.ac.uk/world/cbs/newscheme/ccalculator.html

Winston Churchill Memorial Trust
This is a Churchill bursary, which comes from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and offers bursaries worth up to £2,000 a year to young UK citizens. These bursaries are to offer students, who might not otherwise be able to do so, the opportunity to study for undergraduate degrees at Churchill College. This joint initiative underlines both the Trust's ethos and the College's commitment to widen access to Cambridge University. Between three and five bursaries are awarded each year.
Applying

So, you pretty much like most of what you’ve seen and you want to think about applying. First things first- don’t be put off by the applications procedure. It’s really not that bad (you could even call it worthwhile experience), and hey, we’re here to talk you through it. It’s definitely worth a shot if you’re predicted mostly As at A-Level: the chance to study somewhere like Cambridge is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Step number one…
Decide on your college. You can apply to a particular college or you can do an open application (where you will be assigned a college which has a lower than average number of applications per place for your subject). Don’t worry too much- if you’re stuck, JCR websites and the university alternative prospectus give a good idea of what the colleges are like, as do college open days. The key thing to remember is that everyone loves where they end up. Once you have submitted your UCAS application (by mid October), and it has been received here in Cambridge, it will be acknowledged by your chosen College. Open applications are allocated to Colleges as soon as possible after the closing date. Then you’ll be asked to provide additional information through an online Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ). Remember to be truthful: you don’t need to exaggerate to make yourself sound better. You may also be asked to provide examples of your academic work, or you may be asked to take a short subject-based test when you come for interview, but this very much depends on the different colleges and subjects. The university admissions website and prospectus have a handy table outlining what each college requires for each subject:
http://www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/apply/tests.html

Steps two, three and four…
If you apply you’ll get sent a date for your interview, and an offer of overnight accommodation if you come from somewhere far away. It’s a good idea to begin to read stuff around your subject: articles in papers, journals, ‘Geography Today’, ‘Scientists R Us’ or whatever. You’ll need to show that you’ve looked further than what you’ve been taught at A-Level and have a genuine interest in your subject. You’re not expected to know loads of information; try to develop your own interests and be prepared to engage in broader questions (such as the role your subject plays in the whole wide world). This is something you really can’t fake, so don’t worry about how much preparation your school may or may not have given you. It may be helpful to get an awareness of current events linked to your subject (this is possibly more appropriate for some subjects than others), and if you do more things than just work that’s a bonus too – it shows you can contribute fully to college life. Again, there are no ‘set’ extra-curricular activities you’re meant to do (although some work experience might be handy for budding medics and vets), just follow your own interests. It might also be worth asking a teacher for a mock interview: it doesn’t matter too much if they don’t have Oxbridge experience; it’s just good to have a bit of practice at answering questions and articulating your ideas in a more formal situation.
Applying

The night before...
Get a good night’s sleep and try and relax – and remember that everyone is in the same boat. It’s a good idea to read over the statement you wrote on your UCAS form to refresh your memory about what you wrote. Some interviewers base the interview entirely on this statement, others will barely mention it. Either way, it will improve your confidence to know that you’ve done a bit of preparation and to remind yourself why you’re a good applicant. As for choice of clothes, it’s best to wear something that you feel comfortable in: the interviewers aren’t interested in what you are wearing, they’re interested in how you think.

The interview...
When you arrive, you'll probably be shown to a waiting room full of lots of other (equally nervous) candidates. You'll then get taken to one or two interviews, or an exam, depending on the subject. Relax, be yourself, and try to engage in an intelligent discussion with the interviewer. That’s honestly all there is to it - interviewers aren’t trying to trick you, they want to see you at your best so they can see what you’re capable of. They will probably try to put you at your ease, and they understand that you’ll be nervous. The people interviewing you will probably teach you at some point, so it’s more important to be enthusiastic and willing to learn than it is to be a rocket scientist, unless you want to study rocket science. Speaking of which, science interviews will usually differ slightly from arts ones…

For science interviews, they’ll often show you at least one problem for you to have a go at solving. The important thing is to let them know what you’re thinking. Don’t go quiet and then just spurt out an answer. Most of the time it doesn’t matter whether you get it wrong, they’re interested in how you got to your answer. Try to stay logical and tell them what you’re thinking and why at all times. You might get the question wrong - it's not a big deal, they'll normally ask you something that won’t have been covered at A-Level. Show that you’re willing to try again.

The same principles apply for arts interviews – they’ll try and counter your arguments to find out how your mind works. If you’ve sat an exam they may ask you to expand on points you made or ideas you’ve put forward in your answer. Stay calm and don’t feel you have to back down; they want an interesting discussion. Similarly, don’t be afraid to change your mind, accept part of what they say or point to different conclusions that may come from this. The important thing is to be honest, don’t try to sound unnecessarily clever, or second-guess the answer you think they want.

Afterwards...
You’ll probably hear around January. There are 3 possible outcomes: a straight acceptance/rejection or you could be ‘pooled’. Being pooled means that the college you apply to think that you are potentially good enough to be given an offer, but they don’t have space to take you, so you may possible be given an offer by a college that hasn’t been able to fill its place from those whom they have interviewed. About 20% of pooled candidates get offers.

The best thing to do after the interview is to try and put it behind you and get on with applying everywhere else. Loads of really good candidates get turned down unfortunately, but uni is a great experience wherever you are – whatever the outcome you’re going to have a fantastic three or four years. So good luck!
Useful links

College
Churchill Admissions Office - admissions@chu.cam.ac.uk
JCR Access Officer - jcr-access@chu.cam.ac.uk
Website - http://www.chu.cam.ac.uk
JCR Website - http://jcr.chu.cam.ac.uk

University
Alternative prospectus - http://www.cusu.cam.ac.uk/prospective/prospectus/
Applying - http://www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/apply/index.html

Thanks to all of those that contributed to the making of this prospectus.