Your interviews at Pembroke College

Introduction
Please read this information sheet in conjunction with “Notes for Interviewees”.

Please find below information that we hope will help you in your preparation for your interview(s).

Interviews are an important part of our selection process, but they are only one part. All applicants are individual; there is no single way of demonstrating academic ability and academic potential, and we still consider your application holistically following your interview. It is natural to be nervous before an interview, which we understand and allow for.

What should I wear?
There is no dress code for interviews at Pembroke. We are not assessing you on your appearance in any way, and encourage applicants to dress comfortably and warmly, considering the time of year.

What should I bring?
- Your interview invitation email
- Saved or printed copies of the contents of the Interview Information Pack (for your own reference while you are here) – especially ‘Notes for Interviewees’ and ‘Map’
- The telephone numbers for the Pembroke College Porters’ Lodge (01223 338100) and the College’s Admissions Office (01223 765522)
- Something to occupy you if you have time to wait between interviews
- A copy of your personal statement and any written work you may have submitted – to help you to keep them fresh in your mind
- A pen/pencil and some paper/a notebook

If you are staying overnight, please note that bedding and towels are provided.

When should I arrive?
Please arrive at the College in plenty of time. It may take you a few minutes to find the room where your first interview is to be held, and the timetable makes it very difficult to reschedule if you are late. You should aim to be waiting outside the interview room five minutes before the start of each interview, unless your invitation letter states that you should report earlier.

It does not matter if you arrive at Pembroke very early – you will be able to wait in the Junior Parlour (common room on N-staircase) until it is time for your interview.

What about parents/carers/friends/family?
If you are accompanied by parents/carers/friends/family, they are welcome to look around the public (i.e. outdoor) areas of the College. Please note that they are not permitted to spend time in the Junior Parlour (common room) or to accompany you to your interview room.

What happens before/between/after interviews?
Please see ‘Notes for Interviewees’ for detailed information about accommodation, meals etc.

Current students from Pembroke College will be around to help you in the Junior Parlour (common room on N-staircase) until 18:00 each day. The common room will be open in the evenings too, and is a space where you can read newspapers, watch television, sit and chat, or get some school work done. You can wait here before/between interviews.

If you are staying overnight and would like to eat your evening meal in College (see “Notes for Interviewees” for full details), current Pembroke students will be happy to take to you and other interviewees through Hall for your evening meal. If you would like to join them, please meet in the Junior Parlour (N staircase) at 17:45.
What happens during the interviews?

Who will be there?
There will be one or two interviewers for your interview; your interview invitation tells you who to expect. Some interviewers may be accompanied by an observer, who will be a graduate student or a member of our admissions team. If an observer is present, you will be introduced to them but they will not otherwise take an active part in the interview. You will always be the only candidate in your interview. Although one of your interviews may be with an Admissions Tutor, or another non-specialist, all interviewers are forming a judgement about your suitability for a specific course at Cambridge. The questions asked in all interviews will be of an academic nature.

What will I be asked?
Your interviewers will ask you questions relating to your subjects of study for A-level (or equivalent) courses and to the degree course for which you have applied. They will not ask you ‘trick’ questions, but will often ask questions to which you are unlikely to know the answer straight away. This is done in order to see how you approach new problems and ideas, using the skills and knowledge which you already have.

How can I approach questions like this?
In many cases you may need to identify what information you require in order to answer the question. If you do not have the information you need, or if your memory goes blank, then ask your interviewer and they will help you to get started. As your answer develops, your interviewer may prompt you, or give you extra information. This is normal, and is not an indication of how well you are doing.

Do not be afraid to stop to think before you answer a question, to ask for a question to be repeated, or to admit that you are not sure.

Be prepared for interviewers to challenge you, or to encourage you to approach a problem in a different way. They may want to see how you defend your position, or how flexible you can be in appreciating and responding to new approaches. In short, interviewers are gauging your capacity, enthusiasm and motivation for the Cambridge course you have chosen.

How can I prepare?
Special preparation for interviews is neither necessary nor advisable, as we expect you to be focussing on your final year work. (Post-qualification applicants are advised to refresh their sixth-form/equivalent knowledge.)

The best preparation for interviews is to ensure that you are secure with the material you have so far covered in school subjects relevant to your degree (if any) and then to explore your degree subject outside the confines of your school/college syllabus. In sciences, mathematics and languages, make sure you know the technical side of what you have learned in school. In all subjects, relate your subject to the world around you and get used to asking yourself questions about how you might apply your knowledge to it. With anything you read outside your syllabus, ensure that you read critically – what argument is being made? What is the evidence? Do you agree? Why/why not?

Your interviewers will each have a copy of your UCAS application and Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ). They will not have time to read additional material during your interview, so (with the exception of candidates for Architecture), please do not bring project work to your interviews.

And finally...
You might like to watch the University of Cambridge films about interviews, which you can find here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8S4rTLibYQw
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUwN6GI-0EQ

Further information about interviews can be found here:
http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/interviews

Above all, be yourself! Our interviews are designed to emulate the supervision system we offer at Cambridge, and as such we hope that you enjoy them. We want you to get as much out of your visit to Pembroke, and Cambridge, as much as possible. We look forward to meeting you.