



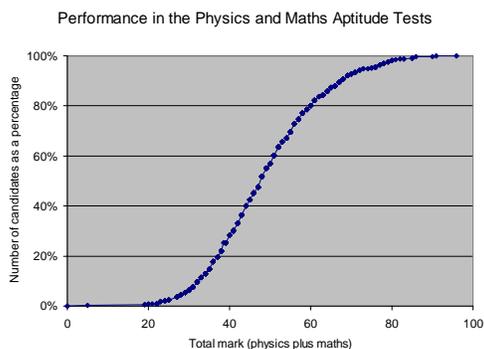
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Report on Physics Aptitude Tests 2006

Oxford Physics has seen a steady and rapid increase in the number of applications for places on both the Physics and Physics and Philosophy courses. In 2006 there was an increase of 7% giving a total of 789 applicants contesting around 190 places, more than 4 applicants per place. From this year, therefore, we have introduced a short-listing process, using the results of our Physics and Mathematics Aptitude Tests to guide us in reducing the number of applicants to around 2.5 per place.

These tests have been piloted for several years, and are known to be good predictors of future performance at Oxford; in particular they are better predictors than GCSE results. The tests are set to a defined syllabus and the contents are checked by school teachers to ensure that they are set at an appropriate level. Further details including sample papers can be found on the Oxford Physics Admissions website www.physics.ox.ac.uk/admissions/.

We are extremely grateful to all the schools and test centres for agreeing to host candidates and for bearing with us through inevitable hitches. The great majority of tests went smoothly, and in the small number of cases where there were difficulties we have made due allowance in interpreting marks. We have also taken note of medical certificates and letters drawing attention to grave events in applicants' personal lives.



Our primary short-listing criterion is the total mark achieved on the two tests, which ranged from 5 to 96, with a mean mark of 49 and a standard deviation of 14. More details are shown in the graph which plots the cumulative rank of candidates scoring a certain mark. All applicants scoring above 45 were then short-listed, as were a small number of applicants who had scored particularly well on one test but not on the other. A small number of applicants below this cut-off who showed other evidence of excellence were added to give a final short-list of around 500

candidates who will be invited to Oxford for interview (candidates from outside Europe will normally be interviewed by telephone).

A key element of the Oxford Admissions process is that the chance of admission should not depend on the choice of college to apply through. Our short-listing is, therefore, followed by a reallocation process, in which candidates are transferred from colleges with large numbers of candidates to colleges with a smaller number of candidates, so as to ensure that the number of candidates per place is approximately constant across the collegiate university. This year around 80 candidates were reallocated. Reallocation has been practised by the University for many years, making it easier for strong candidates to obtain a place at Oxford even if it is not at their first choice college.