

Relationship

As a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the University of Manitoba, I have had the pleasure of working with many talented students. Mr. Sunwoo Baek is one of the students in my Mathematics lab sessions for Summer 2024 at the University of Manitoba. He is one of the most curious and determined students in my classroom. I have observed Mr. Sunwoo demonstrates exceptional analytical skills, a strong work ethic, and a natural curiosity for mathematics. Based on my experiences working with Mr. Sunwoo, I can confidently say he is one of the most dedicated and intellectually curious students I have encountered.

Extenuating circumstances which may have impacted the applicant's education and achievement

Mr. Sunwoo's dedication to interdisciplinary education has driven him to study chemistry, physics, and mathematics since high school. He has extensive experience in preparing for exams, which was evident through his hard work and thorough preparation for the CSAT Korean exam. What I admire most about him is his approach to self-improvement. Instead of waiting for guidance, Mr. Sunwoo actively seeks out opportunities to deepen his knowledge, such as following Coursera modules in his fields of interest. His academic excellence is further demonstrated by his impressive performance in prestigious competitions in South Korea. He had competent results in the Korean Mathematics Olympiad, earned a bronze medal in the Seoul National University of **Education's** Mathematics Competition, and won a silver medal in Sungkyunkwan University's English competition. Mr. Sunwoo is also passionate about applying his knowledge to real-world problems. He conducted a science project exploring the use of insects as a food source, focusing on mealworms and crickets for protein and nutrition bars. Moreover, he enhanced his research skills by experimenting with eco-friendly dehumidifiers made from charcoal and tangerine scraps. Mr. Sunwoo's relentless pursuit of knowledge across diverse fields including Christianity, philosophy, and entomology

combined with his innovative spirit make him an exceptional student, well-prepared to excel in academic or research endeavors.

Supportive information specific and relevant to the courses applied for that you think the university should be aware of

As a freshman at the University of Manitoba, Mr. Sunwoo is focused on business courses, particularly economics, for their practical applications. Currently, he is excelling in Mathematics for Management and Social Sciences, Supply Chain and Operation Management, Introduction to Chemistry Techniques, and Basic Statistical Analysis. He plans to continue his studies in Introduction to Microeconomics, Introduction to Macroeconomics, and Critical Thinking. His engagement in additional online courses, covering topics such as private equity, venture capital, cryptocurrency, and various business skills, has provided him with a robust foundation for your program. During the summer of 2024, I had the opportunity to work with Mr. Sunwoo. He demonstrated exceptional organization, reliability, and computer literacy. He approaches every assigned project with flexibility and enthusiasm. Based on my observations of his abilities, I am confident that he possesses the determination and intellectual capacity to excel in your program. Additionally, I would like to provide his predictive grades for the following subjects: Mathematics - A*, Further Mathematics - A*, Chemistry - A*, and Economics - A. With his strong mathematical background and interdisciplinary studies, combined with his focus on business and economics at the University of Manitoba, I firmly believe he is well-prepared for admission to the undergraduate program at Cambridge University. I highly recommend him for this opportunity.

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As my circumstances were very unorthodox, I also put great effort and attention into my reference letter.

- I was a mature student (Born in 2004)
- I was an international student that was born and raised in South Korea (Going to Kings for Interview was my first time that I had stepped foot on the UK), was not as affluent at English as I am now(albeit I still have orders of magnitude of growth needed)
- I was a full-time student in Canada at the University of Manitoba, who had to sacrifice school work and part time jobs for the application
- And I was not applying through any agency/secondary school/academy, so I was just a private candidate.

I list these not to pity myself by any means, I was fortunate to have these challenges that built my character. My intent is to inform you that Oxbridge Universities are quite lenient to administrative barriers that they are aware that you go through, as long as you can validate in each process that you are a qualified student that is fit for the course you are applying to. (I did not get offers from universities in London so I can't comment on it) That paranoia was one of the reasons why for each stage of the admissions process, I was obsessed with everything being executed perfectly.

I had to get a 9.0 on the TMUA in a 3rd of the time, and that was rehearsed so much that it was exactly what happened. My personal statement had to fully encapsulate my journey and personal interests, while elucidating my competence. I did not read that much of other model personal statements(In hindsight, I was being ignorant if your school or LinkedIn DMs get you hands on personal statements, then do read them!). Even the reference letter had to be perfect, I had too much to talk about but limited characters.

It would never be the type of stuff that a typical Oxbridge Admission package would ever allow their candidates to write out!; mealworms, entomology, Christianity (Religion is indeed

a sensitive topic, but Cambridge has a Christian Heritage so i took a bet I don't think they care that much though)

That being said, there was only one reason I wrote it; It was me being me. Some ubiquitous advice has some truth to it, this is one of them. I remember in youth being so passionate about the brain, spinal anatomy, and insects(What a combo), and I grew up in a Christian household which subliminally influenced me to lean towards it as the truth. This was my edge as it was my story.

Whatever is unique to you, write it out, best if they are personal explorations like the one I mentioned. In hindsight, connecting it to a certain course mentioned in the Course Description to the one that I am applying to would have been really ideal; It shows you did your research on the course, which is much more efficient then just making vague emotional claims as how this subject is galvanising my soul so I have a dying passion about Keynesian Economic Policy.

Someone wrote breakdancing, if you have your Grade 8 or some other personal side quests, send them to the reference letter, it frees up characters to work with in your actual personal statement.

Take this as a pinch of salt; I've only read 20ish personal statements that got into Oxbridge. To divide the two types of personal statements,

- [1] the listing my accolades type of personal statement
- [2] Dissertation/Mini Research Project of Supercurricular (=Extra reading beyond A-level) sources and showing thought process.

I chose 2 because I knew this was where I could mirror my intellect, but frankly because I had nothing to show. Other than the Korean Mathematical Olympiad, nothing was

monumentally worthy of writing. That's why I sent the accolades and participated stuff all to the reference letter.

I think even if you got BMO1, BMO2, John Locke Essay Competition and everything, it's still better to send them to the Reference letter. IF you do want to include something maybe EPQ, but I still think my approach seems so liberating.

P.S. When I was applying, there was this additional portal that we could submit in addition to the personal statement, of which was also edited several times! I can't confirm whether or not this additional portal is still open for students.