

Collective response to an enquiry regarding use of the Extended Project in admission selection decisions (November 2007)

I am writing on behalf of the Cambridge Colleges collectively in response to your letter concerning the use of Extended Projects in our admissions selection process. This was discussed at the meeting of our Admissions Forum on 16 November 2007.

The Cambridge Colleges welcome the introduction of the Extended Project. However, our support for its introduction is primarily because of the benefit we recognise in the skills it will develop in learners and the consequent easing of the transition from study in secondary to higher education. We are anxious not to risk undermining this clear benefit by placing undue emphasis on the Extended Project as an instrument for admissions selection, because of its vulnerability to external influence.

While the Extended Project is still being piloted, rather than being something all learners do, it would clearly be unfair to privilege the fact of having done an Extended Project in our selection process.

As you will know, we ask applicants for many of our courses to submit examples of written work. The Extended Project may well provide a suitable example of written work for this purpose, and it would then be helpful if it covered something relating to the course the student intends to study at university. Similarly, where Colleges invite applicants to suggest topics for discussion at interview the Extended Project may be on a suitable subject. If such written work is requested it will most certainly be read carefully, but it is not guaranteed that it will then be used as a basis for interview. Our admissions interviews are carefully structured to ensure comparability between the assessment of each applicant. Unless the structure of the admissions interview is specifically designed to include discussion of a topic nominated by the applicant, then an Extended Project would not be used as a focus of the interview.

I hope this is helpful in clarifying our position on the Extended Project and its role in admissions selection at Cambridge.

Yours sincerely, and on behalf of the Admissions Tutors of the Cambridge Colleges,

Dr Geoff Parks
Director of Admissions for the Cambridge Colleges