St Catharine’s College
Cambridge

www.caths.cam.ac.uk
Welcome to St Catharine’s

St Catharine’s College is a close-knit and friendly community of students (male and female) and staff situated at the heart of Cambridge University. Our aim is to attract students with strong academic potential from the broadest possible range of backgrounds, and to support them fully throughout their years at one of the best universities in the world.

Your choice of college is important – it will be your main point of contact with university life, it will provide you with the facilities you need to thrive academically, and most importantly of all, it will be the social hub of your life for at least three years. We constantly strive to make St Catharine’s a place where students can succeed, and enjoy themselves, too.

The aim of this leaflet is to give you a brief introduction to what studying, living and socialising is like at our college. If you want to know more – much more – visit our website at www.caths.cam.ac.uk, for detailed and up-to-date information.

And whoever you are, even if you worry that Cambridge might not be for you – read on, maybe come and see us, and most of all, apply!

A brief history of the college

St Catharine’s College was founded in 1473 by Robert Woodlark, and admitted its first students in the sixteenth century.

Initially one of the smaller Cambridge colleges, over the centuries donations of land and money slowly allowed the college to develop the buildings which now stand around its Main Court. St Catharine’s remains unusual in that this court is three-sided, and opens on to the street, giving the college an unusually open and airy feel.

In the twentieth century there was a dramatic increase in the numbers of students until the college now admits approximately 135 undergraduates each year, and employs over sixty ‘fellows’ who teach them, and also conduct world-class research. To meet the needs of this growing community, several further buildings appeared on the site, including a second library and a new larger dining hall, and also leafy St Chad’s on Grange Road, where all second year undergraduates live.

Most recently, the college has built a new centre for talks, events and performances, as well as a large new student bar.

...more detailed, up-to-the-minute information is available at:
www.caths.cam.ac.uk
Learning at St Catharine’s

At St Catharine’s you’ll be encouraged to work hard, and thrive in a highly stimulating intellectual environment, attaining your full academic and personal potential.

Teaching in St Catharine’s, as in all Cambridge colleges, is shared between the University and the College. Lectures and practical classes are organised by the University, but it is the colleges which organise supervisions – the intense and rewarding small-group teaching sessions that are a distinctive feature of the Cambridge system.

Supervisions are your opportunity to take risks with your own ideas. You can explore new approaches and advanced topics, and you will also prepare and submit work in advance which your supervisors will then discuss with you.

All this may seem very different to your school education, and possibly a bit daunting. However, you will receive a great deal of guidance. For example, you will be allocated a Director of Studies, an expert in your chosen subject who will monitor your academic progress and offer specialist advice.

“One of the best things about the teaching at St Catharine’s is that there are always people willing to help out.”

“The personalised nature of teaching in the supervision system has really helped my learning and the academic resources at St Catharine’s have been invaluable in facilitating my study.”

Subjects we offer

St Catharine’s College offers most of the courses available in the University. At the time of printing these were as follows, but check our website for an up-to-date list.

- Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic
- Asian & Middle Eastern Studies
- Chemical Engineering
- Classics
- Computer Sciences
- Economics
- Engineering
- English
- Geography
- History
- Human, Social & Political Sciences
- Land Economy
- Law
- Mathematics
- Medicine
- Modern & Medieval Languages
- Music
- Natural Sciences
- Philosophy
- Psychological & Behavioural Sciences
- Theology
- Veterinary Medicine

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The most important academic resource at St Catharine’s is its academic staff, who are supportive, creative and sympathetic teachers. However, the College also offers excellent facilities.

The College has two excellent libraries – among the best in Cambridge. The first is the beautiful old Sherlock Library which holds an extensive collection of books for English and Modern and Medieval Languages. The second library is a wood-and-glass pyramid which houses a well-stocked selection of books for all other subjects. Both libraries are open at all times, and also hold collections of music, films, molecular models and other study aids.

The College has well-equipped computer rooms, as well as fast internet access in every student room. We also have expert computer officers on hand to assist you with your queries.

There are opportunities for students to study abroad. The College has exchange schemes with Caltech and the Universities of Heidelberg and Doshisha (Kyoto), and the University also runs exchanges with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Living at St Catharine’s

Living in and feeling part of College is an essential and enjoyable element of student life. It’s not only a place to study but it is also your home, where you’ll make many new friends.

We provide accommodation for all our undergraduates. Our main site in the middle of Cambridge is home to all first and third year students, and rooms vary from combined study-living-rooms with separate bedrooms to bedrooms with en suite bathrooms. The variety of accommodation within the main College reflects the differing ages of the buildings and includes both traditional old college rooms and modern rooms.

In your second year all students move together to St Chad’s on Grange Road, a five-minute cycle ride from the main College. This consists of attractive, well-equipped, four- and five-bedroom flats, situated in beautiful gardens.

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Contrary to what you might expect of Cambridge, living expenses and room rents are lower than at some universities. Cambridge terms are short and you will only be charged for your accommodation for thirty weeks each year. Termly rents vary according to room size and type and recent rates are available on the website.

Food. Meeting fellow students at meal times is a central part of college life. Breakfast, lunch and evening meals are available at the self-service cafeteria in the dining hall on the main site.

There are also several opportunities each week to dine at ‘formal hall’, an ever-popular social occasion to which you can also invite guests for a small fee. In addition, societies and clubs often hold special dinners.

If you wish, you can also cook for yourself, in kitchenettes or shared kitchens on both sites, giving you the freedom to create your own culinary masterpieces!

If you have special dietary requirements, you can inform the catering department who will make every effort to accommodate your needs.

Your welfare is important to us. Advice and help are freely available throughout the College and you are encouraged to seek support or guidance if you need it.

You will be assigned a Tutor, who is concerned with your general well-being and to whom you can turn for advice or assistance on any matter. However, there are several other ways to get advice – the College Nurse in our Sick Bay, the Chaplain (regardless of your religious convictions), as well as University-wide student helplines and Counselling Service.

College staff have many years’ experience of helping students solving problems that can arise. You will find that they are an approachable and friendly bunch and will do their very best to help you feel at home.

“The College spirit means you make lots of friends doing completely different subjects. The second year accommodation at St Chad’s gives you the chance to live together in flats rather than single rooms”
...and with the rest of your time...

We believe that ‘non-work’ activities form an essential part of your university experience. Most students find that the College becomes the focal point for their social life, with much of their spare time taken up with an array of stimulating College activities.

Many social events are organised by the Junior Combination Room (JCR) to which all undergraduates belong, as well as various clubs and societies of the College. The elected JCR committee also provides an important, friendly link between you and the decision-making bodies at St Catharine’s.

The committee is responsible for organising Freshers’ Week activities, the biennial May Ball, and the ever-popular ‘Catz bops’ three times a term. The College now has a new, large College bar which is a lively hub for students.

In addition, St Catharine’s abounds with active clubs and societies catering for almost every interest. These include the Shirley Society, the oldest literary society in the University, the Economics Society and the John Ray (science) Society, as well as numerous non-academic societies. There are also frequent seminars given by guest speakers.

Extensive College sports facilities cater for most sports (and all abilities!), including squash, badminton, tennis, athletics, swimming, rugby, football and cricket. There is an all-weather hockey pitch and a modern pavilion. Those keen to row will appreciate the College boathouse, and there is also a well-equipped exercise room on the main Island Site.

The College Music Society is active and ambitious, organising and promoting a wide variety of events, to which all are welcome, from organ recitals to jazz evenings, chamber music concerts to informal ‘open-mic’ events.

The choir is an integral part of the musical life of the College, and is an important ambassador for St Catharine’s, with national and international concerts and recordings. This lively, committed and sociable group welcomes talented and ambitious new singers.

The College chapel was built in 1704 and has been a place of worship and meditation ever since. Open every day, it exists for all College members, providing a place of peace and stillness for those of all faiths, or none.

...more detailed, up-to-the-minute information is available at:
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How to apply

We are always looking for academically strong applicants. If you have done well in your studies in the past, please do consider applying to us – we’ll take up just one choice on your UCAS form!

Many people are daunted by the prospect of applying to Cambridge, but those who do apply usually find it far less stressful than they expected.

You apply to Cambridge through UCAS just as you would for any other university, but with an earlier deadline (usually mid-October). You will subsequently be asked to fill out an additional online application form. Most applicants are then asked to visit us for an interview on a single day in December, and we usually make our decisions by mid-January.

Our aim is to offer places to the applicants who we believe have the greatest academic potential, regardless of who they are and where they come from. We do this using a combination of on-paper academic results, personal statements, and an interview. In a few subjects additional tests may be set, or work experience may be relevant.

Most applicants receive two half-hour interviews, during which we assess your fluency in and enthusiasm for your chosen subject. We go out of our way to be as welcoming and friendly as possible.

Far more detailed advice, including what is required for each subject, and what offers we give, is available on the website.

“Our enthusiastic and friendly JCR, with its vast number of clubs and societies, coupled with the provision of pastoral care, have all contributed to a worry-less time away from home. Catz really has to be one of the best places to be a student.”

Some notable ex-students

- John Addenbrooke, founder of Addenbrooke’s Hospital.
- Nevil Maskelyne, Astronomer Royal.
- Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, President of India.
- Tim Waterstone, bookseller.
- Peter Boizot, founder of Pizza Express.
- Peter Hall, founder of the Royal Shakespeare Company, director of the National Theatre.
- Ian McKellen, actor.
- Terence Young, film director.
- Peter Lawrence, developmental biologist.
- Sarah Springman, international triathlete, professor of engineering.
- Jeremy Paxman, television journalist.
- Rona Fairhead, Chairman & CEO, Financial Times Group.
- Roger Harrabin, BBC Environment Correspondent.
- Sarah Tremellen, founder of Bravissimo.
- Joanne Harris, author.
- Jenny Fray, first female captain with BA.
- Ben Miller, actor and comedian.
- Richard Ayoade, comedian, director.

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How to find out much, much more

This leaflet is intended as only a very general introduction to what we do at St Catharine’s. Large printed prospectuses use up trees and rapidly go out of date, so we provide much more detailed and up-to-date information on our website, www.caths.cam.ac.uk. This includes details of each subject we teach, who teaches it, what we look for in applicants, and how we look for it.

You should also consider attending one of our open days – full details on the website.

Contact us

If, after reading the website, there is anything you’d still like to know, do contact us:

Telephone: 01223 338319
E-mail: undergraduate.admissions@caths.cam.ac.uk
Mail: Undergraduate Admissions, St Catharine's College, Cambridge, CB2 1RL

Find us

If you happen to be in Cambridge and want to have a look around the college, just pop in and do so! If the 'College Closed to Visitors' sign is out, simply go to the Porters' Lodge at the front of the college, say that you are thinking of applying, and they will let you in anyway.

Please be aware that parking in Cambridge is very difficult. It is usually easier to arrive by bus (the college is ten minutes’ walk from the bus station), train (twenty-five minutes’ walk, ten minute taxi), or to use the Park and Ride system (near Junction 11 of the M11 and Junctions 33 and 35 of the A14).

We are on Trumpington Street, next to its junction with Silver Street.

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