Master of Studies in International Relations

Admissions Criteria

Entry to the course is a very competitive process and we normally received roughly 4 applications for every place. In addition to those with the standard entry requirement of a 2i or above in their first degree, we welcome applications from students from 'unconventional' backgrounds and whose professional experience and expertise may be more relevant than a distant degree in an unrelated discipline or, in a few cases, from those with no formal HE record.

In all cases we take extremely seriously the research proposal and references as well as an applicant's academic and professional record. Our criteria for admission are that a student should show evidence that they will be able to cope with the demands of the course.

In addition, the topic they propose must be one that can produce a suitable 25,000 word thesis and that can be supervised and examined within our system. Thus the availability of academic expertise in Cambridge is a key part of the consideration of applications. This also means that it is very helpful if applicants can be as precise as possible in describing their proposed topic. For example, 'The internet and international relations' may not be as helpful to us as 'The legal and commercial implications of the growth of e-commerce; the case of….' or 'National security and e-warfare, 1999-2010'. The admissions process can therefore take some time whilst efforts are made to allocate students to the right supervisors and to ensure that supervisors' loads are not such as to diminish the quality of supervision.

A list of recent thesis titles is available on the course web page along with some sample thesis proposals, but please note there is no standard template for the thesis submission as this is an important element of the application.

Some applicants may be asked to submit samples of written work and/or will be interviewed. This may be a face-to-face meeting with a Course Director and a potential supervisor or it may be possible to set up Skype meetings where appropriate. All applicants with no previous degree-level qualification or one below the standard threshold, but whose application seems otherwise viable must be interviewed in order to satisfy a University requirement for their admission. We may, in addition, interview applicants where we wish to seek further evidence of their academic interests and stamina, their aptitude for the course, and their reasons for applying. This may well also be an occasion when we discuss a research proposal more fully. Please note that it can take several months for applications to be processed as approval is required by various committees. We will endeavour to keep you advised of progress, but you should expect decisions to take a minimum of 3 months and many applicants will not be advised of the outcome until the application period closes at the end of February 2019.