

Motion 5 – Motion to mandate action on the future of undergraduate admissions testing

This Conference notes that colleges have recently been surveyed on the prospect of charging applicants to sit Oxford-only admissions tests following the expiration of a 2-year contract for admissions testing with Pearson VUE at the end of the coming admissions cycle.

Colleges have been asked whether they would in principle approve charging applicants for Oxford-only tests (based on rough estimates of the probable cost per applicant, with responsibility of fee waiver structures sitting under Admissions Committee) The SU VP for Undergraduates sits on AdCom and has therefore already been involved in the discussions so far around this issue.

This motion seeks to establish a collective position, so that the SU can negotiate with the support of CCR and seek outcomes that will support the university's access goals, without imposing infeasible costs on individual colleges.

This Conference therefore mandates the SU to:

- Advocate for other, more cost-effective alternatives to Oxford-only testing, including collaboration with other similarly selective universities;
- Ensure that any testing structure decided gives applicants access to a range of free and accessible resources to independently prepare for admissions tests (such as past papers, mark schemes and examiners' reports);
- Oppose placing the whole cost burden of testing onto colleges, since this would exacerbate college disparities and disincentivise open offers;
- In the event that charging applicants is found to be absolutely necessary in order to continue effective testing, uphold the requirement for a fee waiver system. Such a system must be generous, inclusive and administratively simple for applicants (ideally automatic), to prevent the psychological barriers to Oxford applications from becoming any higher than they already are and to uphold the University's responsibility to follow its access policies and meet targets;
- Put pressure on divisions and departments to collect data on the efficacy of specific admissions tests, and reconsider the need for such tests where the data shows that the tests are neither useful predictors of degree performance, necessary for shortlisting nor positive contributors to access and inclusion targets.