

FINE ART ADMISSIONS FEEDBACK REPORT 2023-24

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the admissions process at the Ruskin School of Art (the University of Oxford's Department of Fine Art) and contains generic statistical information from the 2023 UCAS cycle for entry in 2024. This information is relevant to the BFA course in Fine Art (the only undergraduate degree offered in the department). In some cases, statistics may be withheld to protect individuals within a very small cohort.

We thank all candidates for considering and submitting an application for Fine Art at Oxford. We appreciate the time and effort you have put into making an application. We again received an exceptionally high number of applications and there were many excellent candidates. Every year we have to make many difficult decisions. We hope that the data supplied in this document will help candidates and referees to understand an individual performance in the context of a very competitive field of applications and a complex process. (The figures are preliminary.)

Requests for clarification and further information should be directed to colleges in the first instance, but the Ruskin School of Art may be contacted via admissions@rsa.ox.ac.uk. The School is unable to comment on individual applications.

As the BFA is taught entirely within the School, shortlisting and interviews take place within the department, with colleges interviewing candidates at their discretion. The Ruskin makes the decisions about offers, subject to the colleges' approval.

We know how disappointing it is for applicants, their families, and their schools when, despite being well-qualified and submitting a strong application, they don't receive an offer from Oxford. As this report reveals, the standard is very high, and each year we are conscious that we do not have room for all applicants with exceptional academic records, and who have excellent potential as students of Fine Art. We thank you for your patience with our application process, and wish you well for the future.

Notes:

1. Portfolios were submitted via the online digital platform SlideRoom.
2. Interviews in 2023 were conducted remotely, on Microsoft Teams
3. The Ruskin School of Art does not offer deferred entry.

1. ADMISSIONS DATA

In 2023, the number of applicants for Fine Art at Oxford dipped slightly compared to 2022 but is above average for the last five years.

- **245 complete applications in 2023** (compared to 251 in 2022; 237 in 2021; 254 in 2020; and 208 in 2019 – five-year average 239).

1.1 All Candidates: General Data

	Applications (Incomplete*)	Complete Applications	Shortlisted for interview	College Offers	Open Offers**	Total Offers
Total	249 (4)	245	56	29	5	34

Open Applications***	33	33	3	2	0	2
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Identified as Woman	196	192	45	24	3	27
Identified as Man	40	40	7	4	1	5
Specified "I use another term" or "Prefer not to say"	13	13	4	1	1	2

UK	176 (1)	175	40	20	4	24
EU	6	6	1	1	0	1
Overseas	67 (3)	64	15	8	1	9

* UCAS application received but no portfolio submitted

** In 2023-24, five colleges participated in the rota for the Open Offer Scheme for Fine Art, in which a participating college may underwrite an offer made to a candidate identified by the Ruskin for a place, in addition to their usual college places for Fine Art.

*** Open Applications – when candidates choose Fine Art as their subject at Oxford but decide not to select a college of entry: they are then assigned to a college

Of the 245 candidates with complete applications:

- **14% (1 in 7.2) were offered a place.**
- **23% (1 in 4.4) were invited to interview.**

Of the 56 candidates invited to interview:

- **61% (1 in 1.65) were offered a place.**

1.2 Access: Home (UK) candidates' backgrounds

1.2.1 School type

Home candidates – post-16 (sixth-form) education	Applications (175)	Shortlisted (40)	Offers (24)
State	123	26	15
Independent (or overseas) school	47	14	9
Information not available	5	0	0

1.2.2 Contextual data

For UK candidates we use contextual data, such as school performance and postcode data (Oxford Admissions website:

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/decisions/contextual-data>).

Home candidates	Applications (175)	Shortlisted (40)	Offers (24)
Most disadvantaged group	21	5	4
Next most disadvantaged group	45	14	8
Other applicants with available contextual information	64	14	7
Most advantaged group	26	3	2
N/A (data not available)	19	3	3

The final outcomes show that of the UK Fine Art offer holders, 50% come from the two most disadvantaged groups, and 16% from the most disadvantaged group.

1.3 Recommended Qualifications– Foundation courses

The Ruskin highly recommends that candidates commence a full-time post-18 Foundation diploma in Fine Art (or equivalent) before applying, though candidates are also accepted directly from sixth form. (Departmental webpage:

<https://www.rsa.ox.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/applying-to-study-for-a-bfa>).

Home candidates *	Applications (175)	Shortlisted (40)	Offers (24)
Enrolled on or completed a Foundation Diploma or equivalent post-18 qualification	64 (36.6%)	23 (58%)	17 (71%)

* These figures are based only on Home candidates and exclude EU and Overseas candidates, who may not have access to foundation courses in their home country

2. ADMISSIONS PROCESSES

Unlike in other Humanities subjects, shortlisting and final selection recommendations for Fine Art are centralised and determined by the Ruskin School of Art's Admissions Panel as a whole, and are not devolved to colleges. (This is because all teaching of Fine Art, including tutorials, takes place within the School, and not in colleges.)

2.1 SHORTLISTING

2.1.1 Selection Criteria

Candidates are assessed on the two parts of their application: the information on their UCAS form (past and predicted exam results, academic reference and personal statement), and their portfolio submission.

UCAS submission

Departmental webpage: <https://www.rsa.ox.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/applying-to-study-for-a-bfa>).

The UCAS form is expected to include a supportive reference, and evidence that the candidate has either:

- achieved or is predicted to achieve 3 'A' grades at A-level or equivalent; OR
- if enrolled on or has completed an Art Foundation Diploma (or equivalent post-18 art-related qualification), achieved A-A-B at A-level or equivalent.

The shortlisting panels also referred to the candidate's personal statement for further information about their art practice and artistic and academic interests.

Portfolio submissions

Departmental webpage: <https://www.rsa.ox.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/submitting-a-portfolio>.

Having demonstrated that they have met the minimum entry requirements on their UCAS form, candidates' applications are assessed on the strength of their portfolio.

2.1.2 Procedure for shortlisting

- There were four shortlisting panels, each consisting of three Ruskin tutors; the panels convened on a single day, with a final Shortlisting Review meeting at which all the panels joined together to agree final decisions.
- All candidates' UCAS applications were reviewed by a Fine Art admissions panel in conjunction with portfolios submitted on SlideRoom for the purposes of shortlisting for interview.
- Portfolios were reviewed by Fine Art department admissions panel members and scored from 10 – 0, with those candidates achieving a score of 7 or more meeting the requirement for shortlisting for interview. See **Appendix 1** for the portfolio marking scale.
- Applicants with borderline scores in some aspects of their application will only have been invited for interview with special consideration of other factors, for example, contextual data.

After the Shortlisting Review meeting, the Admissions Coordinator assigned all candidates invited for interview to a panel composed of three Ruskin interviewers.

The Ruskin informed the colleges through the University's central Admissions system of the outcomes of the shortlisting, so the colleges could notify the candidates accordingly.

2.1.3 Weighting

Information - weighting	High	Medium	Low
Predicted or actual performance at A-Level (or equivalent)	Yes		
Portfolio Submission	Yes		
Personal Statement		Yes	
Reference		Yes	
GCSE scores			Yes

2.2 INTERVIEWS

2.2.1 Modes/Criteria of assessment of shortlisted candidates

Departmental website: <https://www.rsa.ox.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/applying-to-study-for-a-bfa>).

Shortlisted candidates were invited to send by email some examples of additional / more recent artwork, which were added to their previously submitted portfolio on SlideRoom, and which could form a basis for discussion.

- All shortlisted candidates successfully sent their new work by the deadline ahead of the interviews.

Candidates were assessed on

- their additional / more recent artwork (together with the work submitted in their portfolio) – marked on the same scale as the portfolios (see 2.1.2 above and **Appendix 1**);
- their interview – marked on a scale of 10-0, with 7 as the minimum score to be considered for an offer (see **Appendix 2** for interview scoring scale). Tutors expected the candidates to demonstrate through the discussion:
 - the ideas and processes informing their work; their willingness and ability to communicate these; and their ability to listen and give considered responses within the discussion;
 - their motivation and commitment to the study and practice of Fine Art (including the History and Theory of Visual Culture);
 - their awareness of and critical engagement with contemporary art.

2.2.2 The Interview Process

All summoned Fine Art candidates were invited in advance (by the college of application/re-allocation) for a 15-20 minute interview with the Ruskin School of Art, either on Monday 4 or Tuesday 5 December. Additional interviews with colleges (if required) also took place on these days. All interviews were conducted on Microsoft Teams.

There were two panels, each with three Ruskin tutors, on each day of interviews. Most candidates were interviewed by at least one interviewer from their first-choice college, either as part of the Ruskin panel and/or in a further interview at the college itself. Of the twelve colleges offering places for Fine Art in 2024:

- Colleges with Ruskin Fine Art faculty on Ruskin interview panels: 8
- Colleges which sent non-Fine Art tutors to join the respective Ruskin interview panel: 1
- First colleges requiring an interview in college, in addition to the interview at the Ruskin: 2

Colleges that had conducted interviews in college sent their observations/preferences to the Admissions Coordinator.

2.2.3 Decision Making

The Ruskin panels met with the Admissions Coordinator at the conclusion of all the interviews, to discuss and scrutinise their decisions and the selection of candidates.

The selected candidates were then allocated to first-choice colleges if possible, with reallocation to other colleges as necessary.

As well as the college offers, five candidates identified for a place by the Ruskin were made 'open offers' underwritten by colleges participating in the Open Offer Scheme*, with college allocation to be confirmed after A-level results have been received in August (or earlier if a space becomes available due to an offer-holder withdrawing).

Of the 29 successful candidates made college offers:

- 19 were allocated to their first college;
- 10 were allocated to a second college without a further interview.

Of the 5 successful candidates made offers through the Open Offer Scheme:

- 2 were made an Open Offer underwritten by their first college;
- 3 were made an Open Offer underwritten by a second college.

Candidates who receive an Open Offer will be told which college they will go to after examination results are released in August 2024, if not sooner.

3. STATISTICS

Scoring Statistics

Once a candidate has demonstrated that their qualifications meet the minimum entry requirements (3 'A' grades at A-level or equivalent; or, if enrolled on or has completed an Art Foundation Diploma (or equivalent post-18 art-related qualification), achieved A-A-B at A-level or equivalent), their application is assessed largely on the basis of their art practice, as demonstrated through their portfolio and at interview.

3.1 Portfolio Scores

Portfolio marks at each principal stage of the admissions process

(Scale 10 – 0, with those candidates achieving a score of 7 or above shortlisted for interview)

	All Applications	Shortlisted	Offers
Range of marks	3 - 10	7 -10	7-10
Mean	5.84	7.8	7.9
Median	5.5	8	8
Mode	5	7	8

3.2 New Work Scores

Marks given to new work presented

	Applications	Shortlisted	Offers
Range of marks	N/A	3-9	7-9
Mean	N/A	7.1	8
Median	N/A	7	8
Mode	N/A	6	8

3.3 Interview Scores

Marks given to interviews

	Applications	Shortlisted	Offers
Range of marks	N/A	3-10	7-10
Mean	N/A	7.2	8.2
Median	N/A	7	8
Mode	N/A	6	8

Appendix 1 – Portfolio assessment for shortlisting (and new work presented at interview)

Departmental webpage: <https://www.rsa.ox.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/submitted-a-portfolio>

• **Portfolio Review**

During the process of reviewing portfolios, tutors look for work that goes beyond the mere fulfilment of school curricula. We search for highly motivated activity, and for a breadth of engagement, a sense of purpose and a strength of opinion in the way the portfolio is edited. A high degree of competence in the use of specific media is expected, but it is not in itself sufficient. The portfolios of candidates called for interview will also exhibit curiosity and creativity beyond the expectations of the A-level or equivalent, and an awareness of contemporary art practice. It is important for us to be able to discover a sense of the temperament underlying the work, and to sense the deeper interests that inform the portfolio. We are not interested in finding a particular formula or a specific style, but in signs of energy, ambition, critical reflection and creativity. Your portfolio should show that you have:

- *An independent and creative mind*
- *An ability to go beyond the requirements of the school curriculum*
- *Visual curiosity and imagination*
- *An informed awareness of contemporary art*

Portfolio Marking Scale - those candidates achieving a score of 7 or more were automatically shortlisted

10 - Exceptional work that invariably exhibits curiosity and creativity beyond the expectations of A-level or equivalent, and a critical engagement with contemporary art.

9 - Some exceptional work that exhibits curiosity and creativity beyond the expectations of the A-level or equivalent, and a critical engagement with contemporary art.

8 - Highly competent work that exhibits curiosity and creativity beyond the expectations of the A-level or equivalent, and some engagement with contemporary art.

7 - Some highly competent work that exhibits curiosity and creativity beyond the expectations of the A-level or equivalent, and an awareness of contemporary art.

6 - A diverse range of competent work that exhibits curiosity and creativity, but limited awareness of contemporary art.

5 - Competent work that exhibits some curiosity and creativity, but limited awareness of contemporary art.

4 - Work that exhibits some competence, curiosity and creativity, but limited awareness of contemporary art.

3 - Work which exhibits some competence and curiosity, but little or no awareness of contemporary art.

2 - Work which exhibits some competence or curiosity, but little or no awareness of contemporary art.

1 - Work which exhibits a lack of both competence and curiosity, and little or no awareness of contemporary art.

0 - An incomplete and/or incompetent portfolio.

Appendix 2 – Interview assessment for the offering of places

Departmental webpage: <https://www.rsa.ox.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/applying-to-study-for-a-bfa>)

- **Interviews**

We consider the interview as an opportunity for candidates to tell us about themselves and the ideas that inform their work.

The work included in the second, pre-interview submission will form a basis for discussion. Candidates are encouraged to talk about their work and interests and to discuss contemporary art, including books they have read and/or exhibitions that they might have recently visited.

Interview Marking Scale – candidates were expected to score at least 7 to be considered for an offer.

10 - An exceptional interview that transmits the candidate's inspiration to the interviewers themselves

9 - A very illuminating interview in which the candidate demonstrates consistent originality of thought and imagination

8 - A very illuminating interview that throws new light on the candidate's work and interests

7 - An illuminating interview that demonstrates the critical and imaginative potential needed to study at the Ruskin

6 - An illuminating interview, but one that does not fully demonstrate the critical and imaginative potential needed to study at the Ruskin

5 - An informative but only partially illuminating interview about the work and the candidate's interests

4 - An interview that demonstrates an ability to talk about the work and to answer questions about it in a way that is informative but not illuminating

3 - Some communication, but limited ability to explain the work or respond to questions about it

2 - A very basic ability to communicate or answer questions

1 - Little or no communication of any kind

0 - Interview did not take place