

FINE ART ADMISSIONS FEEDBACK REPORT 2025-26

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the undergraduate admissions process at the Ruskin School of Art (the University of Oxford's Department of Fine Art) and contains generic statistical information from the 2025 UCAS cycle for entry in 2026. 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, and cannot reconsider its decisions.

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 2025 were conducted remotely, on Microsoft Teams
3. The Ruskin School of Art does not offer deferred entry.

1. ADMISSIONS DATA

In 2025, the number of applicants for Fine Art at Oxford rose to the highest number received in the previous 5 years.

- **302 complete applications in 2025**
- compared to 267 in 2024, 245 in 2023; 251 in 2022; 237 in 2021; and 254 in 2020 – **average 2020-2024 = 250.**

The number of UK applicants remained exactly the same as the previous admissions cycle (2024-5); the increase in applications occurred in the number of overseas/EU candidates, especially from North America.

1.1 All Candidates: General Data

	Complete* Applications	Shortlisted for interview	College Offers	Open Offers**	Total Offers
Total	302	75	29	6	35

Open Applications***	68	11	3	2	5
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Gender

Identified as Woman	234	52	16	6	22
Identified as Man	56	20	10	-	10
Specified “I use another term” or “Prefer not to say”	12	3	3	-	3

Area of permanent residence

UK	184	54	25	3	28
EU	10	2	-	-	0
Overseas	108	19	4	3	7

* 308 UCAS applications were made. However, two candidates withdrew their applications prior to shortlisting, and a further four candidates failed to submit a portfolio by the prescribed deadline, making their application incomplete

** In 2025-26, 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.

A further college made an exceptional Open Offer for entry in 2026.

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

Of the 302 applicants:

- **24.8% (1 in 4) were invited to interview.**
- **11.6% (1 in 8.6) were made an offer for a place.**

(Note: of those candidates who made Open Application, 16% were invited to interview, and 7.4% were made offers – the admissions panels were not informed that the candidates had made Open Applications, and reviewed them without prejudice.)

Of the 75 candidates invited to interview:

- **46.7% (1 in 2.1) were offered a place.**

Access: Home (UK) candidates' backgrounds

1.2.1 School type

This data indicates only the school type of the UCAS Apply Centre from which the application was made (ie if a candidate applied from a Foundation course, their 'school type' will likely be 'Other' – ie an FE college, art college or university), and not necessarily reflect the school type where those Foundation candidates attended 6th-form for A-levels etc.

UK applicants	Applications (184)	Shortlisted (54)	Offers (28)
State school/college	83 (48.5%)	20 (39.2)	8 (29.6%)
Independent school	49 (28.7%)	16 (31.4%)	9 (33.3%)
Other (this could include tertiary colleges/universities teaching post-18 Foundation courses)	36 (21%)	15 (29.4%)	10 (37%)
Overseas school	3 (1.8%)	0	0
N/A (data not available)	13	3	1

Preliminary internal analysis suggests that 61% of all successful UK candidates were at state schools/colleges for their post-16 (sixth-form) education.

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>).

UK applicants	Applications (184)	Shortlisted (54)	Offers (28)
Most disadvantaged group	33	12	8
Next most disadvantaged group	40	13	6
Other applicants with available contextual information	71	21	5
Most advantaged group	21	4	1
N/A (data not available)	19	4	2

Outcomes show that of the successful UK candidates, 42% come from the two most disadvantaged groups, and 28.5% 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: www.rsa.ox.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/applying-to-study-for-a-bfa).

UK applicants *	Applications (184)	Shortlisted (54)	Offers (28)
Enrolled on or completed a Foundation Diploma or equivalent post-18 qualification	65 (35%)	26 (48%)	16 (57%)

* 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. However, 10 Overseas candidates had also undertaken a Foundation or equivalent qualification, of whom 3 were shortlisted for interview, and 2 were then made offers.

NB: we note that some Overseas candidates were taking the International BTEC Foundation Diploma concurrently with and alongside their sixth-form qualifications (A-levels, IB etc). While the Ruskin strongly recommends that prospective applicants undertake a Foundation Diploma before enrolling on a Fine Art degree programme, **the intention is for candidates to take the Diploma as a POST-18 course, BETWEEN school and university, whereby they have a year to focus exclusively, and full-time, on discovering themselves as artists, without the additional pressures of other subjects.** If the Diploma is studied alongside sixth-form/high school qualifications, students will not gain the full benefit of the Foundation, and only add to the stresses and pressures of their studies.

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 either:

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

Of the 302 complete applications:

- 5 UCAS applications were incomplete (omitting qualifications or missing references)
- 17 candidates' grades were insufficient or their qualifications were not accepted by Oxford - see www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/international-students/international-qualifications
- 5 candidates' predicted grades did not meet the minimum entry requirements.

275 candidates met, or were predicted to meet, the entry requirements and their portfolios were reviewed for shortlisting.

2.1.2 Procedure for shortlisting

- There were four shortlisting panels, each consisting of three Ruskin tutors, reviewing c.65-70 portfolios; 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 8 or Tuesday 9 December. All interviews were conducted on Microsoft Teams.

There were three 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 2025:

- Colleges with Ruskin Fine Art faculty on Ruskin interview panels: **9**
- Colleges which sent non-Fine Art tutors to join the respective Ruskin interview panel: **1**
- Colleges requiring an interview by a college panel, in addition to the Ruskin interview: **2**

Additional interviews with colleges (if required) also took place on Friday 12 December. 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, x 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:

- 23 were allocated to their first college*
- 5 were allocated to a second college without a further interview
- 1 was allocated to a second college following a further college interview

Of the 6 successful candidates made offers through the Open Offer Scheme:

- 3 were made an Open Offer underwritten by their first college;
- 2 were made an Open Offer underwritten by a second college without a further interview.
- 1 was made an Open Offer underwritten by a second college following a further college interview

Candidates who receive an Open Offer will be told which college they will go to after examination results are released and places confirmed in August 2026, if not sooner.

* there were 5 successful candidates who had originally made open applications (ie did not make an application to a first-choice college). Their applications were assigned by the central University admissions team to a college prior to shortlisting: four of those successful candidates were made offers by the college to which they were assigned, and one was made an offer by a second college.

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 (of 242 qualified applicants)

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 qualified applicants (242)	Shortlisted (75)	Offers (35)
Range of marks	4 - 9	7 - 9	7 - 9
Mean	6.2	7.6	7.8
Median	6	7	8
Mode	6	7	8

3.2 New Work Scores

Marks given to new work presented

	Applications	Shortlisted	Offers
Range of marks	N/A	5 - 9	7 - 9
Mean	N/A	7	8
Median	N/A	6	8
Mode	N/A	7	8

3.3 Interview Scores

Marks given to interviews

	Applications	Shortlisted	Offers
Range of marks	N/A	4 - 10	7-10
Mean	N/A	7	8
Median	N/A	6	8
Mode	N/A	7	8

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

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