



Preparing for your Sidney interviews

This guide has been put together to provide you with more information about this year's interview process at Sidney Sussex College.

NOTE: Please share this guide with your school if you will be interviewing there. It may be useful for your teacher and/or IT Office to refer to when helping you set up.

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1. Your interviews

After the hard work and effort of making an application you have now reached the point where you have been selected for interview. Congratulations!

If you have not yet had the opportunity to visit Sidney, you are most welcome to join us on a virtual tour of the College by visiting our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPNzkrWW6l8>. You can also watch our interviews miniseries on our YouTube channel with a selection of subjects offering mock interviews to showcase examples of questions that an undergraduate applicant might be asked at a Cambridge interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUstdAcXLyVQNpqKtjWEgsog5rWJ4CrgV>.

The University has prepared some guidance about online interviews that we recommend you take a look at:

<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/interviews/online-interviews>.

Sidney will be using [Whereby](#) for all interviews except for Architecture which will be held via Zoom. A separate technical user guide will be provided to these applicants.

We have designed the interviews to allow you to do the best you can regardless of technological limitations. Our interviewers are all trained to ensure they can do all they can to put you at ease and ensure the interviews run as smoothly as possible.

a) A few days before the interview

- If you are sitting your interview at home, let your family/housemates know the time of the interview and ask them not to use the internet connection - either via their phone/computer or a streaming service like Netflix or Spotify.
- Try to choose a quiet room and put a note on the door reminding everyone of your interview time. This applies to pets too – no special consideration is given to cute cats and dogs!
- If you plan to be interviewed while you're at school, please discuss with a teacher what room will be available at the time of your interview. They may need a few days to arrange this because of restrictions in the school due to cohort bubbles and cleaning arrangements.
- Make sure you appear clearly onscreen by experimenting with the position of your phone/tablet/laptop and the room lighting. Try to find a neutral and uncluttered backdrop. Avoid flashing Christmas decoration lights!

We completely understand that finding a quiet uncluttered space at home is not without difficulties but do try to avoid having any washing or personal items you would not want to be seen lurking in the background if you choose not to blur it. Also, don't try to impress with a bookcase of weighty tomes behind you, especially ones written by your interviewers!

Double-check your interview date and times. **Note:** *The times noted in your invitation to interview email all relate to the UK's time zone (GMT), so do make sure you check this.*

b) On the day of the interview

- Make sure your devices are fully charged and that you have access to a socket/s to charge your device/s during the interviews if necessary – please remember that video calls use a lot of power and batteries can run low very quickly.
- Check emails regularly because this is how the [Sidney Admissions Team](#) will contact you if there are any issues or delays.
- Ensure you have Photo ID available in case you are asked to show this to the interviewers, along with paper and a pen with a thick black nib (in case you need to show your working).
- Whilst you might want to have a quick look at TikTok or Instagram to calm your nerves before the interview, consider making your device as efficient as possible by closing non-essential browser windows as well as non-essential programs and apps. Switch off alerts, alarms and other devices to silent, flight mode or preferably off.
- If you are at home, try not to be in a room where there is background noise like a washing machine/tumble dryer/microwave. If you are at school for the interview we appreciate that bells/alarms may go off but if possible try to avoid being a room where there is likely to be excess noise. If there is a sudden noise though, please don't worry!
- Remind your family/housemates of your interview time and ask them to avoid using the internet connection, particularly streaming services like Netflix.
- Please don't be too concerned with what to wear to the interview. Wear something that you are comfortable in.
- You must be alone in your interview room for the duration of the interview. You must also be alone online except for the interviewers and, if relevant, other College personnel who may be involved in setting up your interview or observing it.
- It's completely normal for throats to feel a little dry when we're nervous so have some water next to you just in case.
- You are not permitted to film or record your interview in any way.

The interviewers are not expecting a polished performance, and please don't be afraid to ask for a question to be repeated or worry if you are asked to repeat something. This is completely normal. Listen carefully to what the interviewers are saying, give yourself time to answer and ask for clarification if you need it.

Interviewers will not try to 'trip you up' or make you feel foolish, and will not ask any trick questions. The aim is to assess your academic potential and suitability for the course chosen.

As one interviewer asks questions and engages in discussion the other is likely to be making notes. This is completely normal as it will help the interviewers reflect on the overall interview later. They will also note any technological issues that may have occurred during the interview.

Although we have tried to cover every eventuality, we are aware that other issues may crop up so please do contact the [Sidney Admissions Team](#) with any concerns.

c) A final note

Feeling nervous and apprehensive about the interview is to be expected so do keep in mind that the interview is only a part of the overall selection process. The interview is to help both you and the interviewers establish if the learning environment at Cambridge is right for you.

Try to enjoy the experience! This is a chance to discuss a subject you are interested in and want to learn more about, with people who are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about this subject.

Overall, the most important thing is to be yourself!

2. Frequently asked questions

Q. Do I need to download anything?

No, Whereby is all browser-based. See '[Device Requirements](#)' below for more on browser compatibility.

Q. Do I need to a Whereby account?

No, you will access the interview Room via a link provided in the invitation to interview email. Simply enter your full name as you enter the Room (entering your preferred first name in brackets at the end of your name is fine!).

Q. What hardware do I need?

- Computer
- Webcam
- Microphone. This may be built-in to your computer, webcam or an external headset. A headset is recommended (where feasible) as this will make your voice sound clear and help eliminate outside noise
- A mouse or interactive pen tablet (for [Miro](#)). **Note:** *Some subjects require candidates to draw or write in the interview, and you will have been informed in your invitation to interview if you will be using the whiteboard to draw/write.*

Have a pen (with a thick, black nib) and paper to hand in case you need them.

Q. What should I do if my interviewer does not admit me at the exact time specified in my invitation to interview email?

If you have not been admitted to your interview **more than five minutes** after the scheduled start time, try logging on again, and if this fails, telephone the [Sidney Admissions Office](#) for further guidance. Continue waiting on Whereby during this time while you ring the College Admissions Office.

Q. What should I do if I lose connection or my screen freezes?

DON'T PANIC – we're prepared for all eventualities and if you hit technical difficulties we will work around them. If you get ejected from the interview room then just use the same link or URL that you used to enter the first time, it will continue working throughout. If you continue having problems, contact the [Sidney Admissions Team](#).

If technical problems arise during the interview (for example, the screen freezes, or your connection 'drops off'), in the first instance you should follow instructions from your interviewer/s if you can hear them. If you lose all connectivity, please disconnect and reconnect using the link provided to you. Try this twice more, and if you are again unable to re-connect, please call the [Admissions Office](#). The interviewer/s will note disruptions to your interview/s and you will not be disadvantaged by these.

In the event that your interview/s are subject to substantial technical problems that mean that your interviewer/s do not feel they have enough information to make a

judgement on the interview/s, the [Sidney Admissions Team](#) will arrange to re-schedule your interview/s. You will be advised of this if it is the case.

Q. What about other issues?

Take a look at the [Troubleshooting section](#) that features later on in this guide. Please share this with your school's IT team if you will be at school for the interviews.

The [Sidney Admissions Team](#) will be on hand to help you with any issues in advance or on the day.

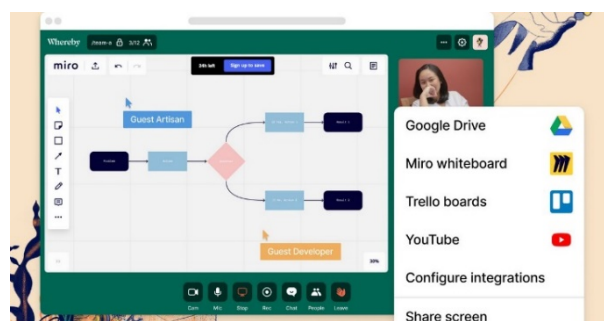
3. Platform and tools

Sidney Sussex College will be using **Whereby** for your interviews.

- [Whereby](#) is a simple, intuitive web-conferencing tool, similar to Zoom.
- If you are being interviewed in a technical subject where the interview/s may involve 'workings', your interviewer/s may use a virtual whiteboard known as [Miro](#). Candidates will be informed if the interview will involve Miro in the invitation to interview email. There are several ways to 'write' to the whiteboard, and the most effective way is by using a writing tablet, as pictured here. Schools often have access to these, and may be able to lend one to you if needed.



Other ways to use the whiteboard involve a mouse, or a stylus pen, or a keyboard, for example. For some touchscreen devices, you may be able to use your finger. Please have a pen and paper next to you too in case these are required (the pen should have a thick, black nib). If none of these are possible, your interviewer/s will work to provide an alternative way of working through the interview questions. Please note that we are prepared for assessment via a variety of formats, and you will not be disadvantaged by the equipment that is available to you.



4. Whereby

a) Introduction

Whereby is a web-conferencing tool that offers a fully browser-based experience, meaning there's nothing to download prior to use (**Note:** there is a mobile app if needed, but we strongly recommend using a computer/laptop).

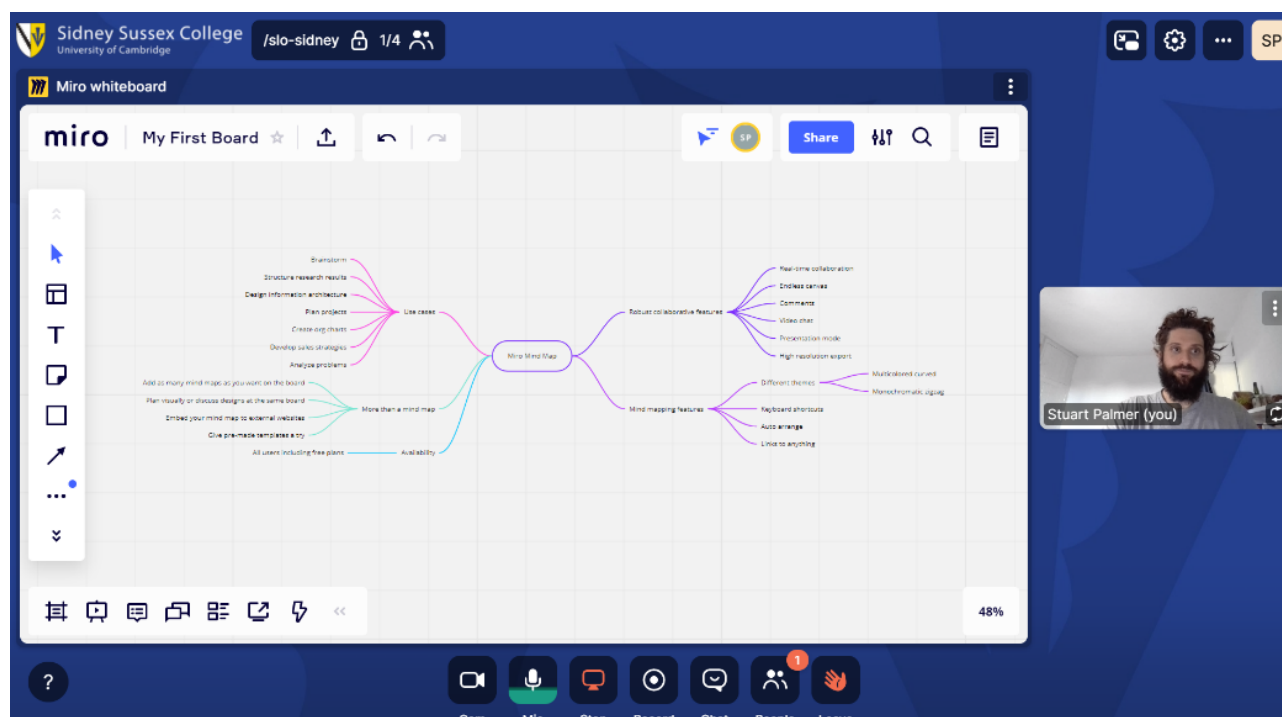
It's nice and easy to join a meeting (known on Whereby as 'Rooms'), and all you need is a URL which the Admissions Office will send you in the invitation to interview email.

Just click the URL and you'll be taken to the video meeting. There's no need to create an account, download an app or any software.

Whereby offers standard features like text-chat and the ability to share documents or images on your screen. It also provides integrated access to the Miro collaborative whiteboard platform. Miro can be used like a blank piece of paper in the interviews, with you and your interviewers all having access to draw, type and edit the sheet.

It's possible that you may use Miro during a STEM subject interview. Candidates will be informed in the invitation to interview email if they will be using Miro.

We recommend that you go to the [Miro website](#) to test out the software and get used to interacting with the whiteboards using either a mouse or writing tablet. You can test the buttons and controls too. We also recommend you watch this video which provides a good general introduction to *Miro*: [Beginner's guide to Miro](#).

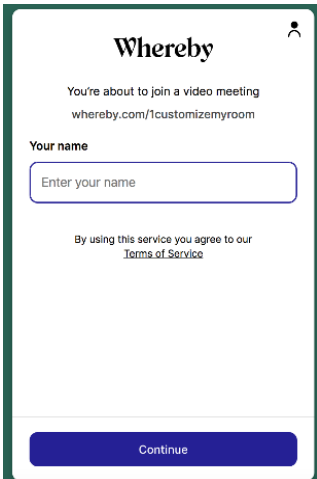


b) How to join a Whereby Room

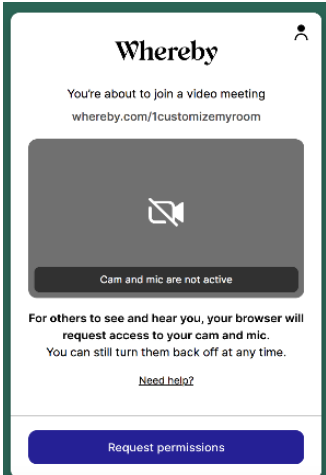
1. Links to your interview Room will be provided in the invitation to interview email that will be sent from the [Sidney Admissions Team](#).
2. Click the link to the Room to open Whereby up in a new browser tab (you may also copy and paste the link into your browser if clicking doesn't work).

NOTE: Please make sure you have closed any other applications that may use your camera or microphone prior to logging into the Whereby Room.

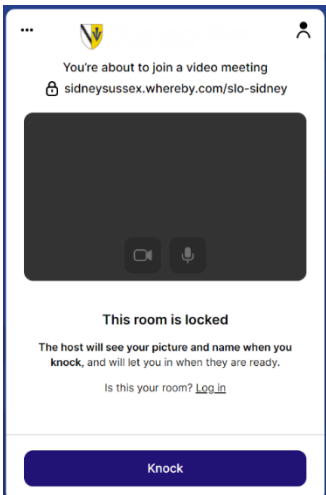
3. You **will not** go straight into the Room, instead you will be prompted to type in your name. This will be visible to all those present in that Room - **Make sure this is the first name and surname provided in your UCAS application. It's fine to use a preferred first name, but please ensure that this matches the preferred name in your UCAS application.**

A mobile app interface for Whereby. At the top, it says 'Whereby' with a user icon. Below, it says 'You're about to join a video meeting' and 'whereby.com/1customizemyroom'. There is a section 'Your name' with a text input field containing 'Enter your name'. Below that, it says 'By using this service you agree to our Terms of Service'. At the bottom is a blue button labeled 'Continue'.

4. Once you have confirmed your name, check all is well with your camera and microphone by clicking on 'Request Permission' and select 'Allow' in the browser pop-up to confirm.

A mobile app interface for Whereby. At the top, it says 'Whereby' with a user icon. Below, it says 'You're about to join a video meeting' and 'whereby.com/1customizemyroom'. In the center, there is a grey rectangle with a camera icon and a slash through it, and text below it says 'Cam and mic are not active'. Below that, it says 'For others to see and hear you, your browser will request access to your cam and mic. You can still turn them back off at any time.' and a link 'Need help?'. At the bottom is a blue button labeled 'Request permissions'.

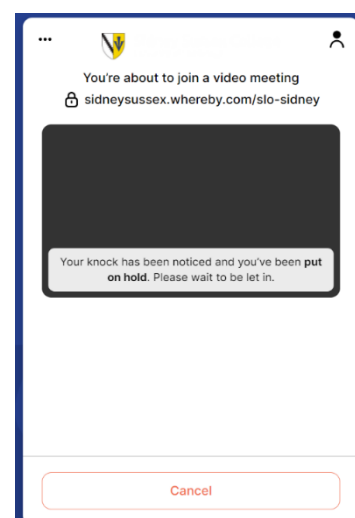
5. After allowing access, you'll see an image of yourself. You should select the 'Knock' button to enter the meeting at **precisely** the time stated in your invitation to interview email. For example, if your interview will start at 11.00am, set up your name and camera/microphone settings in advance, but do not 'Knock' until it is 11.00am exactly.

A mobile app interface for Whereby. At the top, it says 'sidneysussex.whereby.com/slo-sidney'. Below, there is a large black rectangle with a camera icon and a microphone icon. Below that, it says 'This room is locked'. Then, it says 'The host will see your picture and name when you knock, and will let you in when they are ready.' and a link 'Is this your room? Log in'. At the bottom is a blue button labeled 'Knock'.

Important: Please aim to knock at the exact time noted in your invitation to interview email and no earlier.

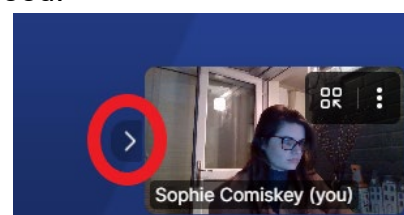
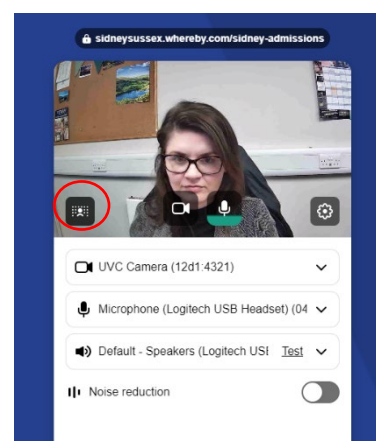
6. After knocking, the interviewers will either immediately admit you or 'acknowledge' your knock and leave you waiting briefly while they get the interview ready.

If you are kept waiting for more than five minutes please contact the [Sidney Admissions Team](#).



c) Room controls

- **Microphone/Camera control:** You can mute your own microphone or camera using the 'Mic' and 'Cam' buttons, so avoid doing this as it will be important that your interviewers can see and hear you throughout.
- **Background and noise reduction:** Whereby now includes an option to blur your backdrop. Access this via the circled icon. There is also an option to enable noise reduction.
- **Hide Self View:** You may want to hide your own camera feed so that you just see the interviewers rather than your own camera feed.
- To hide your camera feed, click the three dots on your video screen then select "Pop out." Your video will now appear in the bottom right-hand corner of your screen. Next click the > to the left of your video to hide yourself (circled).
- **Ending/leaving a meeting:** When the interview is over you can use the 'Leave' button to leave the room, or exit the window. If you get cut off or leave by accident, DON'T WORRY, you can use the same URL/link to re-enter the room multiple times.



d) Whereby device requirements

Computer

You don't have to download anything to take part, it's all browser-based. Whereby supports older operating systems so your computer should meet the requirements in most cases:

- **Windows:** Windows 7 and later
- **Mac:** MacOS 10.11 and above
- **Linux:** Any x64-based system

Linux users that use the Wayland protocol for their display server will experience issues with screensharing. Our recommendation for Linux users is to use the Xorg protocol, as it doesn't experience these issues.

Supported browsers

Whereby works best with **Google Chrome, Firefox and Opera**. The latest two versions of each browser are supported.

Caution: Whereby works poorly with Safari and Edge, so please avoid using these!

See more here: <https://whereby.helpscoutdocs.com/article/415-supported-devices>

NOTE: If you do not have the latest version of Chrome or Opera, you may need to install the screen sharing extension. In this case, the system automatically asks you to do this as soon as you open the link.

Smartphone/tablet

- **iOS devices:** "Whereby – Video Meetings" is available free of charge for [download in the App Store](#). As soon as you have installed the app, just click the link in the confirmation email to be forwarded to the app in the chat room with your contact person.
- **Android:** "Whereby – Video Meetings" is available free of charge in the Play Store. But you don't need to download an app, you can simply open the link in the Google Chrome browser.

We strongly advise that wherever possible you use a computer/laptop and web browser for this process. Accessing via mobile severely limits the software functionality.

Whereby troubleshooting

Whereby's support centre at <https://Whereby.helpscoutdocs.com>

Checklist: Things to do in advance

It's a really good idea to test your tech in advance of these sessions to make sure that you're:

- familiar with the software that we'll be using for interviews
- have tested all of the hardware that you'll be using for the interviews

Tick it off!	To do
	Work out where you'll be doing your interview (ie at home or school) and what hardware you'll be using for this.
	<p>Go to the Whereby website and have a look around.</p> <p>Remember that you won't need an account to use Whereby and you'll be accessing rooms that we have set up already.</p> <p>You may, however, wish to set up a room yourself to test the buttons and the layout (accounts are free and you may set up one Room with this). You may even wish to hold a 'mock interview' with a friend or family member! Remember that there will be two interviewers present in each interview.</p>
	<p>Running your own tech test</p> <p>Check the following are working:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• microphone• camera• mouse or writing tablet (<i>if your invitation to interview email notes that you will be using the Miro whiteboard</i>)• internet connection (it might be good to try this out by inviting a friend or guardian on another device into your Whereby Room if you have set up a free account)
	Some subjects will require you to use the Miro whiteboard and this can be used most clearly and effectively with a writing tablet. It would be worth testing out Miro in the Whereby Room (via the share screen button at the bottom of your screen). As above, doing this with another person in the Room might be a good idea. You can also practice on the Miro website .

Note: You should run your tech test on the device that you'll be using on the day, with the same browser, hardware and internet connection.

5. Troubleshooting

This section provides some useful tips to help counter the minor technical issues that candidates may encounter over the course of their interviews.

Interviewers are trained to help you work through any possible issues, but you may wish to read some of the information below in advance to give you a better idea about overcoming technical issues.

Please remember that the [Sidney Admissions Team](#) will be on hand to help you work through any issues too.

Technical issues

1. [You cannot join the session](#)
2. [You join the Room with no video / microphone](#)
3. [Miro whiteboard won't launch or load in one/all screen\(s\)](#) [certain Sciences/Mathematics interviews only]
4. [Miro crashes/freezes for one or all participants](#) [certain Sciences/Mathematics interviews only]
5. [You or the interviewer\(s\) drop out during the interview](#)
6. [Microphone is too quiet or someone is inaudible](#)

Logistical issues

1. [Interview start is delayed](#)

Issue	Example mitigation
You cannot join the session at specified time	Contact the Sidney Admissions Team . They will inform the interviewers and let them know there is an issue.
You join the Room with no video / microphone NB if there are microphone issues you should be able to interact with the interviewer via the chat button at the bottom of the screen.	Check browser. The first thing to check is the browser you're using. We've asked you to avoid using either Microsoft Edge or Safari as there are common bugs with these browsers. Whereby works well with Google Chrome, Firefox and Opera . The latest two versions of each browser are supported. There are links below that walk you through updating your browser: Google Chrome ; Mozilla Firefox ; Opera Check permissions. It is easy enough to accidentally click "Block" instead of "Allow" when prompted as you set up the camera/mic before joining the Whereby room. To rectify this just press the

	<p>camera icon in the browser's address bar to undo the block, then press "Try Again". This icon looks slightly different on different browsers, but look for something that resembles a video camera.</p> <p>Close browser and re-open. Simple, but effective. Just closing down the browser and re-launching has been known to solve this glitch.</p> <p>Avoid the App. Last year some candidates reported that using the iOS or Android Whereby app on <i>older</i> tablets/phones can produce glitches with cameras/mics. If using the app, leave and re-enter the Room via a browser window instead.</p> <p>Try a different network. Some schools have filters/firewalls that prevent programs like Whereby/Zoom from connecting to webcams or microphones. Hopefully you have tested your connections to avoid this, but if all else fails try switching to a different network (if available). Speak to your school's IT team in advance to check this has been tested.</p> <p>Clear cache/cookies. Finally, it is possible that this is caused by a stale mic/cam permissions cookie, or possibly because of another application that's taking priority access over Whereby. Clearing your cache and cookies for your entire browser <u>and then restarting your computer</u> can solve this.</p> <p>Instructions for clearing your cache and cookies for our supported browsers are found here: Google Chrome; Mozilla Firefox; Opera. A quick way to do it is to hit CTRL+SHIFT+DELETE when the browser is open.</p> <p>Sometimes a reset of your system environment will resolve these types of issues, so this is a "catch-all" solution before further investigation is required!</p>
<p>Miro whiteboard won't launch or load in one/all screen(s)</p> <p>[applicable to certain</p>	<p>Leave and re-enter the room. Straightforward, but leaving and re-entering resets the plugin and can solve the glitch.</p> <p>Check browser. There have been issues with Miro</p>

<p>interviews only as noted in the invitation to interview email]</p>	<p>launching in Microsoft Edge and Safari, if using those make sure you're using the latest versions or consider shifting to Chrome/Firefox/Opera.</p> <p>Update your system OS. Make sure you are using the latest version of Windows/MacOS. If you're not, update your system OS. This is not feasible in an interview session due to time constraints, but could be investigated if you encounter this issue in advance.</p> <p>Instructions on checking your OS for updates can be found at: Microsoft; Mac; Linux</p>
<p>Miro crashes/freezes for one or all participants</p> <p>[applicable to certain interviews only as noted in the invitation to interview email]</p>	<p>Leave and re-enter room. Very occasionally Miro can freeze or crash, sometimes this will only happen for one person in the Room, with other users not experiencing the same issue. If this happens, whoever it happens to should leave the room and re-enter. This should reset your Miro plugin meaning you will either see the board being shared by another user again. Try to re-connect three times and, if you have no success, please contact the Sidney Admissions Team</p> <p>Avoid the App: Some candidates have reported that using the iOS or Android Whereby app on <i>older</i> tablets/phones can produce problems with Miro. If using the app consider leaving and re-entering Whereby via a browser window instead.</p> <p>Revert to analogue: If all else fails, we'll revert to pen, paper and webcam. Please have paper and a pen with a thick-black nib to hand.</p>
<p>You (or your interviewer(s) drop out during the interview</p>	<p>Re-enter the room. Try to re-enter with the same link or URL that you used to enter the first time as it will continue working throughout. You may wish to try a different browser. Try to re-connect three times and, if you have no success, please contact the Sidney Admissions Team</p> <p>Close unnecessary browser windows or tabs. Close extra tabs on your browser as having numerous tabs open (in our experience more than 20 tabs at once can cause issues) this can cause</p>

	<p>Whereby to struggle and drop out.</p> <p>If one of your interviewers disappear from the Room, then the interview will be paused while they re-enter the Room. A member of the Admissions team may step in temporarily.</p> <p>If both interviewers disappear, please leave the Room and contact the Sidney Admissions Team. They will then contact the interviewers.</p> <p>Contact one of the admissions team. If it becomes clear you cannot re-enter after a few attempts, contact the Sidney Admissions Team.</p>
<p>Microphone is too quiet or someone is inaudible</p>	<p>Check the Microphone permissions. If you have accidentally denied permissions to the microphone you can rectify this by clicking the camera in the top of the browser window (see above).</p> <p>Try alternative microphone. If using headphones with built-in mic, try unplugging it and relying on your computer's in-built mic. Alternatively, if there is a pair of headphones with built-in microphone to hand (the sort that come free with a mobile phone are ideal) try plugging those into your device. Make sure assign this as a 'Headset' when plugging it in to your computer.</p> <p>Check sound input settings on your device: Microsoft; Mac; Linux</p> <p>Re-enter Room on new device. If all else fails, try re-entering the Room on a different device with a separate microphone if at all possible (e.g., a mobile phone, iPad, separate computer etc.).</p> <p>Use the chat. If no solution works, communicate with your interviewers via the chat. They will let you know next steps.</p>

Logistical issues and courses of action

Interview start is delayed	If your interviews are going to be delayed, the interviewers will inform the Sidney Admissions Team so we can advise you. Check your emails regularly!
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6. Contacting the Admissions Team

Please contact the Sidney Admissions Team if you require any assistance.

Email us: admissions@sid.cam.ac.uk

Call us: +44(0)1223 3 38872 (Spencer) / +44(0)1223 3 38834 (Zoe)