WELCOME TO SIDNEY!
This is Sidney Sussex College’s Alternative Prospectus, written by current students to give a view of what student life is like. We don’t want to give you loads more information about the process of admission or the courses - that’s all covered in the College and University Prospectuses - instead we want to tell you about what it’s really like to study a degree at Sidney, and prove our college is a great place for you to apply to!

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WHAT IS A COLLEGE FOR?
Cambridge University is split up into over 30 colleges, of which Sidney Sussex (Sidney) is one. The college organises the students’ accommodation and supervision (how you’re taught at Cambridge), as well as taking care of all its students’ welfare. The college site usually has, as well as accommodation, a “hall” where students can eat and Sidney also has a gym, gardens, a bar, a TV room and a library.

WHY SIDNEY?
For students the most distinctive aspect of Sidney is the unrivalled sense of community - everyone is so supportive of each other and you feel welcome and valued regardless of your background. Moving away to university is a scary but exciting new experience, and the welcoming atmosphere at Sidney really helps you settle in and makes the sometimes very stressful workload bearable.

Sidney and all its student accommodation has an amazing location in the very centre of town, and more importantly right opposite Sainsbury’s - so you’ll never be more than a short walk away from your lectures, the many department libraries, or Cambridge’s nightclubs.

The gardens in Sidney are surprisingly large and, unusually for a Cambridge college, you are actually allowed to walk on the grass! It’s easy to forget you’re in a city centre when you’re surrounded by the peaceful walled gardens, and in Summer they host garden parties and the May Ball, as well as being a great place for a picnic or a bit of work in the sun.

Sidney also has a cheap college bar, a library open 24 hours, a recently refurbished gym, and fantastic quality accommodation - so has a lot on offer to help students both work and relax.
ACCOMMODATION

Sidney provides a room for you for the **whole time you’re here**, so you never have to worry about renting anything privately - it’s all sorted by the college. Not only does this mean you're guaranteed to always have friends nearby, but the rent is also **very cheap** compared to other universities - you **only pay 30 weeks per year** and don’t have separate utility bills - and there’s also **friendly housekeeping staff** (bedders) who help to keep your accommodation tidy and change bed linen once a week.

**1ST YEAR** You change your room each year you’re here, and the first year accommodation is allocated completely randomly before you arrive, to make it fair to everyone. All first year accommodation is incredibly social - perfect for making friends!

_A typical student’s room and shower room is shown below. All rooms have furniture, including a large desk, and some rooms have sinks. _**Sussex House** (left) is being refurbished in 2015 and _**Garden Court** (right) is right above the bar and library, and was renovated in 2014. Both are on college site and have rooms for 1st, 2nd and 3rd years._

**Blundell Court** has en-suite rooms, and is also available for 1st, 2nd and 3rd years.
ACCOMMODATION

2ND AND 3RD YEAR The order which you choose your room in 2nd and 3rd year is determined by a random (rather than academic) ballot which you can enter with your friends to guarantee you live together. All rooms are essentially the same - some have slightly better kitchens, others have better views - but it is ultimately living with your friends which makes living in college accommodation such an unforgettable experience.

GRADS Graduate students are very much part of the Sidney community. Some live in college grounds, but most live in college owned houses specifically for graduates.

No. 1 Portugal Street (top left) and the two other adjacent houses are popular with 2nd years, and have a great community atmosphere. College grounds, including Chapel Court (top right) have a handful of staircases boasting the oldest rooms in Sidney, where students can choose to live.

Sidney House (right) is a very recently refurbished building literally 30 seconds walk from the front gate, and has massive kitchens (below right): great for communal cooking. Cloister Court (below left) is popular due to its fantastic views of the gardens, as well as its beautiful 19th century architecture.
FOOD

Just because you’re a student doesn't mean you have to live off beans on toast for three years. Sidney is affectionately known by other colleges as “Sidney Sainsbury’s” due to us being located directly opposite, and the store is held dearly in every Sidney student’s heart. But our passion for food goes beyond the enticing orange lights: there are plenty of other ways to eat at Sidney.

HALL is the canteen and many students choose to eat here. The food is great, and a variety of options are available, including at least one vegetarian option, but other dietary requirements are catered for too. The cost goes onto your termly college bill (see “Finance”), so you pay for what you buy, and as well as being very cheap, going to hall is a great chance to socialise.

FORMAL HALL is a completely optional but fantastic experience, especially to show off the fancy college when parents or friends visit! It’s not taken as seriously as you expect, and there’s no minefield of etiquette to negotiate, just a fantastic waiter-service three course meal for very cheap (around £10)!

COOKING FOR YOURSELF is easy too. It varies but there’s a minimum of a microwave, fridge, kettle and electric grill near all student accommodation, and most rooms also have access to kitchens with hobs and ovens. Apart from Sainsbury’s, there’s a nearby Aldi, Tesco and Waitrose, as well as the market only two minutes away which does excellent fruit and veg.

EATING OUT is easy since all major restaurant chains are on the same road as Sidney, and there are also fantastic independent restaurants and cafés scattered around the city centre.
Of course, studying is a big part of being at Cambridge, and you will be challenged and will have to motivate yourself more than you did during school or college, but the workload is nothing to be anxious of at all. You will be helped in the transition from sixth-form or college-work to university-work, and you will definitely always find time to socialise and join sports teams or societies. It’s great studying at a place where world-leading research is taking place and where you’re taught, often one-to-one, by those world-leading researchers! The way you will study at Cambridge will be split up into:

**LECTURES** are where everybody from across the university, from all colleges, come together to be taught the basics of the subject - most likely by a world-leading researcher. Different subjects organise their lectures differently, so have a look on your subject’s website for more info.

**SUPERVISIONS** are what makes Cambridge different from other universities. They’re one or two-to-one meetings with a fellow (i.e. a teacher) or sometimes a PhD student, where you get to go into the depths of your subject. Supervisions are organised by the Director of Studies for your subject. The type of work you need to do for supervisions varies by subject, and they’re way less scary than they seem. It’s actually really fun and enjoyable talking through your ideas with experts in your subject, and it’s a great way of learning.

**CLASSES/SEMINARS** are organised discussion groups to extend your understanding or practise a particular topic or skill. For example language students have classes to practise speaking their chosen language.

**LABS** are usually afternoon sessions for scientists, where they can put into practice things they’ve learnt in lectures. There will be demonstrators available to show you how to use any specialist equipment and help you complete your lab reports.

**READING** will also form a large part of your study here, and Sidney's well stocked library will be able to get any book you need, and is also a great workspace. There’s also the many departmental libraries spread around the city, and the massive University Library to get books from and work in.
SOCIAL LIFE?
It might be hard to believe but yes, it is possible to have a social life at Cambridge. There’s a great variety of things to get involved in: from the cheesy nightlife or a chilled night in the bar to being part of a society for practically anything you can imagine - it’s always possible to find time for the great diversity of things to do at Cambridge!

NIGHTLIFE at Cambridge isn’t the most chic - it’s usually some (fantastically) trashy variety of chart music remixes and 90s anthems - but there are also venues which do offer good music, if you’re into that sort of thing, and some really amazing cocktail bars too. A night out in Cambridge is always a great way to have fun. The Junction is a popular venue for gigs, and the Corn Exchange (three minutes from Sidney) is a regular stop for touring comedians.

SOCIETIES here are very popular and include: the famous Cambridge Union, which holds frequent debates with lots of important public figures, Sidney’s undergraduate run subject societies (including Confrat - the oldest university history society in Europe!) and a university society for every sport, political party, country, subject and niche interest you can think of. Check out http://www.societies.cam.ac.uk/.

SPORTS participation at Sidney is encouraged at all levels, and is free. Rowing is very popular, as well as women’s and men’s rugby, football, mixed lacrosse and netball, but there’s a team and club for just about every sport, even tiddly-winks! Oxbridge also has its very own Varsity sports competition every year, as well as the famous boat race.

CHARITY WORK is also popular and easy to get involved with at Cambridge. There’s a dedicated green and ethical officer position in Sidney’s Student Union, and the University’s student union has its own RAG (Raise and Give) Charity too, but many other charities and campaigns have a big presence here as well.

COMEDY and THEATRE scenes in Cambridge are also thriving, with the ADC Student Theatre and famous Footlights students comedy group (members include David Mitchell, Sue Perkins, Richard Ayoade and Hugh Laurie). Both are easy to get involved with once you’re here, and are a great choice for a night out.
WELFARE
Cambridge life is hectic - full of supervisions, lectures and social activities - but sometimes you just need a break from the library or just someone to talk to. Sidney has a fantastic support network from both students and staff, including designated SSCSU (Sidney’s Student Union) officers representing the needs of students.

COLLEGE FAMILIES
As soon as you’re accepted into Sidney you become part of a college family, consisting of parents in 2nd year (one of whom will do your subject) and a sibling in the same year as you. Your college parents are there for you to ask as many questions as you want before you arrive, and also mean there’s always someone around to talk to about any social and academic issues you may have. There’s also a family formal dinner in Freshers’ Week, and even a college wedding!

SSCSU WELFARE
Sidney’s Student Union’s committed and enthusiastic welfare team organise events such as acoustic nights and bouncy castles, to guide you through the hectic Cambridge terms, and represents the needs of students within college. All students have representational officers so there is always someone within the student body to talk to and advise you about any issues you have. The university also has a counselling service, provides sexual health supplies, and has a student-run advice service.

COLLEGE STAFF
There’s an equally dedicated team of Tutors and Tutorial staff (including the College Nurse) who will always be willing to help with any issues you have: whether you’re struggling with work or want to change a module, or you become ill during the exam period, help is only an email away!
CAMPAIGNS & DIVERSITY AT SIDNEY

Sidney endeavours to make everyone welcome, regardless of background, and promotes the rights of minority groups to create a genuinely enlightened and inclusive place of learning. Sidney’s student union (SSCSU) has a welfare representative for all minority groups and our student body is involved with many campaigns.

LGBT+ The student body at Sidney supports all students who self identify as LGBT+ or other similar identities. Sidney’s student LGBT+ rep organises social events throughout term, and there are a range of university wide events too. Many students also write articles for Cambridge’s own student LGBT+ magazine, “Get Real” (http://getrealcambridge.com/).

DISABLED STUDENTS

Sidney’s student body aims to make sure that our minds and bodies are taken seriously, our ways of doing things are valued equally and our rights are respected. Sidney will ensure no one is disadvantaged due to a disability during their time here, or during their application process.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Sidney has free storage for international students, and Sidney’s student representative looks after the welfare of international students in the college, and organises social events throughout term and for students staying in college over the holidays.

WOMEN

Sidney regularly hosts speaker events and group sessions, and students can get involved with student-focused campaigns, welfare support, shaping University policy and practice, and being the democratic voice of women students to eliminate all forms of gender disadvantage at the University http://www.womens.cusu.cam.ac.uk/.

BME

SSCSU’s BME rep voices the concerns of Ethnic Minority students, and Sidney’s student body aims to empower us to be proud of our background, and enable us to overcome adversity and any apprehension we may hold, so that that we make our views heard. There are many campaigns within the university which Sidney is involved with, such as FLY - primarily a safe space for self-identifying BME women, with weekly meetings and a closed Facebook page where together we discuss our experiences, build solidarity among WOC at Cambridge, and show that some of the issues that may make WOC hesitant in applying are being addressed. Sidney hosted Cambridge’s first Black History Month Garden Party.
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SCIENCES STUDENT

2ND YEAR NATURAL SCIENTIST

8:20 I get up and have a shower and get dressed. I eat breakfast in the kitchen and chat with a friend before leaving for lectures at 8:50.

9:00 Two lectures, where we learn about modelling plate motions. We get lecture notes which cover most of what is in the lecture, but it is still useful to make my own notes too.

11:00 An hour break before my practical session. I get a coffee from the department’s tea room then sit down to skim through the lecture notes.

12:00 Practical session, where we solidify our knowledge gained in the lecture. There’s loads of fossils laid out in the lab and we study each in turn, asking the demonstrators to explain anything we don’t understand.

13:40 I finished the normally two-hour practical a bit early, so I rush back for lunch at hall. I then pop into Sainsbury’s, conveniently opposite college, and get some chocolate to fuel my hopefully productive afternoon.

14:30 I have some reading left to do for an essay, then also finish off a question sheet I was set, which involves some calculations. Working is punctuated by lots of wasting time on the internet.

18:00 Some friends and I cook dinner together, then do a bit more work.

21:30 We head over to the college’s bar for a relaxing evening.

23:30 Bed. Tomorrow I can have more of a lie in because my lecture isn't until 11am.

*Note, this is one student’s typical day. Your schedule will vary day-to-day: some days you will be more busy and some you will be less busy, depending on your subject - whether you do natural science, maths, engineering, economics etc. - and when you have your supervisions and lectures. The structure of practical sessions and lectures also is different, so check your subject’s website for more information, or come to an open day.
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN ARTS STUDENT

1ST YEAR HISTORIAN

9:30  I have some reading to do before a lecture so I get up early finish that.

10:30  I leave college to walk to Sidgwick site for my lecture, meeting some friends on the way.

11:00  Lecture on early-modern history. We get a brief lecture handout but make most of the notes ourselves. After, I get a book out from the department library and walk back to college for lunch.

14:30  After lunch I go to Sidney’s library and carry on with the reading for an essay, due in for a supervision I have in few days, and make detailed notes on the reading material.

17:00  Supervision. It’s held in college and is with a college fellow who I get to know throughout the year, so is really relaxed. There’s one other student there, and we each discuss our essays and get feedback from the supervisor. We spend the rest of the hour discussing the essay’s topic in depth.

18:30  I go to hall for dinner with the people who live in my corridor. I have lasagne and chocolate cake and it costs under a fiver! We check our pigeonholes to see if we have new post (this after-dinner pigeonhole-checking is something of a tradition at Sidney), then go back home.

19:30  I have a bit of time before the play, so I organise my notes and then chat with friends.

20:30  We head to the ADC Theatre, only two minutes walk away, to see a play that one of our friends is performing in. It’s absolutely amazing and is produced entirely by students at Cambridge.

23:00  We go to the JCR TV room and watch a bit of trashy TV before bed.

*Note, again this is only one student’s day. This is just to give an outline of what you’ll be up to here, and your day will undoubtedly be different.
FINANCE

Everyone can afford to study at Sidney: do not be put off by finance! Cambridge is not an expensive place to study, since we only pay 30 weeks rent, the extensive libraries will lend any book you’d need, there’s virtually no travel costs and bursaries give non-repayable money (dependent on household income) to help students with their studies. There are two areas of finance to consider:

TUITION FEES are the same for all courses at all colleges. This is the same for almost all courses at Russell Group universities. The government Tuition Fee Loan is paid directly to college and covers tuition fees completely for UK students. This loan is only repayable once you leave University. Please refer to www.gov.uk/student-finance.

LIVING COSTS are things such as rent, food, travel and books. Your rent and food that you buy at hall goes on a termly college bill. The government also provides a means-tested maintenance loan and grant. Refer to the University website for information about this.

There are also additional sources of funding:

THE CAMBRIDGE BURSARY SCHEME offers means-tested grants additional to any other loan or grant and never needs to be paid back! You apply when you get here. A range of COLLEGE BURSARIES are also provided by Sidney and are awarded automatically when you get here to those who would benefit the most. For up-to-date information on financial support have a look at www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/finance/financial-support and www.sid.cam.ac.uk/current/undergrads/finance/additfinancsupport.html.

PART-TIME JOBS can earn you some money during the holidays (which tend to be longer than at other Universities), but are not possible during term time. However, Sidney students can work in the college bar to earn some extra cash.
FIVE STEPS TO APPLYING

DO YOUR RESEARCH

In year 12 and over summer you should look through university prospectuses and read around a few subjects you’re interested in to make sure you choose the right course for you! Come to a Cambridge open day at the start of July too! See the university website: www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/entrance-requirements for current entrance requirements and typical offer levels.

APPLY

You should submit your UCAS application by 15th October. Use your personal statement to show why you want to study your chosen subject at university, and make it personal! But remember it’s only one part of a whole array of things taken into consideration by the admissions process.

SAQ

This is nothing to worry about, and is simply an extra online form, just for your Cambridge application, submitted after your UCAS deadline. It just asks for extra information such as topics you've covered and class sizes, but is not a test! Also choose your photo wisely: it will be on your university card and supervision reports for the three or four years you’re here!

INTERVIEW

If invited for interview you’ll receive information about this in mid-November to early-December. It’s usually two roughly 25-minute teaching sessions with you and some fellows or researchers in your subject. Interviewers understand you’ll be nervous, but almost everyone comes out saying it wasn’t as bad as they thought, so it’s not worth getting stressed over! Sidney students will be on hand to offer tea, coffee, biscuits and friendly chat to put you at ease in any case!

OFFER!

Congratulations, you have an offer from The University of Cambridge!

Please feel free to email admissions@sid.cam.ac.uk (the college’s Admissions Office) with questions about entrance requirements or the application process or access@sscsu.org.uk (the student access officer) with questions about student life!
WHAT NEXT?

CUSU Shadowing Scheme in January and February gives potential applicants the opportunity to accompany a current student for a few days to lectures and supervisions etc. and is a great (and free!) opportunity to see what Cambridge is really like. See http://www.applytocambridge.com/shadowing/ for more info.

Making the most of an open day means planning beforehand - nothing really in depth, just make a rough schedule of what you want to do on the day. Visit a few of the colleges to get a feel for them, and visit the department of your subject and go to talks if they’re giving them (see the university website for details). Most importantly there will be plenty of students helping on the day so ask them what it’s like to be a student here and bring a list of questions! Contact the college if you’re unable to visit on an open day and we can sort out a visit for you.

Picking a College may seem difficult and complicated, but it’s really not worth agonising over. Most applicants pick a college to apply to, but some make an “open application” so a college is picked for them. The choice of college can be based on any reason you like: they’re all basically the same and because of the pooling system (www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/decisions) the college you pick makes no difference to the likelihood of you being made an offer to the University.

Key Links below can be used for your research into applying to university and to ask any questions you might have:

Sidney Sussex Admissions Director, Dr Kirsten Dickers, welcomes any specific questions you have about the application process to admissions@sid.cam.ac.uk. Or, if you want to ask a current student anything about studying here, email the SSCSU Access Officer access@sscsu.org.uk who will be more than happy to help you.

The university website has all the information you need about applying, and is your first point of call: www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk
Sidney Sussex’s website also has tonnes of information about the college and is useful for researching applications: www.sid.cam.ac.uk/admiss/ugrad/
SSCSU Website is the site for Sidney’s Student Union, and has lots of info about things going on at college: www.sscsu.org.uk