Sidney Sussex College was founded in 1596 by Lady Frances Sidney, Countess of Sussex. Known affectionately as ‘Sidney’ by its students, the College has a distinguished history which is apparent in its buildings, extensive gardens and roster of members, past and present. Among these, Sidney Sussex can count politicians and statesmen, five Nobel Prize winners, wartime code breakers, film and opera directors, novelists and TV personalities. Today, students find themselves part of a thriving close-knit community, where academic excellence, motivation and participation are highly valued. This is a place where students feel at home at once and make friends forever.

Welcome to Sidney Sussex College

Sidney Sussex has over 400 years of history but is a College with clear ambition for its future. We are a vibrant and forward-looking College, with firm plans for continuing success in academic endeavour, and all sporting and cultural pursuits. This is an exciting time for the College, and if you want to push the boundaries and explore just how far your abilities will take you, then come and join us!

Professor Richard Penty
Master
The University of Cambridge comprises 31 self-governing colleges, all providing academic guidance and teaching, accommodation and food, library and computing resources, social facilities and pastoral care. What makes Sidney Sussex College the right choice for you?

Our ethos is defined by academic ambition and enthusiasm, combined with a supportive and inclusive environment. We expect our students to share our goals, and we encourage them to aim high by providing all the support and facilities necessary to help them achieve their full potential. To this end, we have excellent provision for teaching, with a Fellowship of some 60 academics covering all the major subjects offered at Cambridge. We celebrate the academic success of the entire community, while valuing the commitment and contribution that every individual brings to the College.

Another strength is our strong sense of community, both within the student body and – a striking feature of Sidney Sussex – between students and academics. Our students have many opportunities for contact with Fellows in a wide range of disciplines, and they value the broader education that this provides.

Sidney Sussex enjoys a wonderful location, right in the heart of Cambridge, with easy access to all the University’s departments and facilities. Despite its central position, however, the College’s beautiful gardens – one of Cambridge’s best-kept secrets – provide a peaceful and tranquil atmosphere in which to study and relax.

In addition to their studies, our students become involved in a range of activities, including sports, music, drama, politics, journalism and many others. We encourage our students to get involved and try new things, and help them to find the balance between their academic and other activities.

Why choose Sidney Sussex?

“Sidney is so much more than just a place to work. Its small size means it’s really easy to get to know everyone and get involved with all sorts of opportunities. The atmosphere is incredibly inclusive and friendly.”

Charlotte Burns
Natural Sciences (Biological)
Academic excellence

We want every student to make the most of their time with us. The resources we have available, in terms of academic staff, library provision and financial support, mean that we can offer a focused and individualised education.

Expert guidance and support

Every student has a Director of Studies to provide advice and guidance on their academic work. One of the Director of Studies’ main responsibilities is to arrange the supervisions that are the essence of the Cambridge teaching system. Most Directors of Studies are Sidney Fellows, although in some smaller subjects this role is filled by an external academic who has strong links with the College.

Intensive and interactive tuition

Supervisions provide an opportunity for students to spend time each week discussing their work with expert teachers and researchers in their field, in groups small enough (typically one to three students) to ensure that there is a high level of interaction and participation. Unlike the more formal lectures, supervisions are intended to be discussions, where students can develop their analytical skills and powers of argument, improving and deepening their understanding of the course.

It is important to provide the best supervisions possible, and we make a significant investment in our supervisors. Where possible, we choose them from among our own College members, either Fellows or graduate research students. However, if we do not have someone who can teach a particular subject, we will arrange supervisions with a Fellow or graduate from another college. This is a common arrangement in Cambridge, and ensures that our students receive the best teaching available.

When I’m supervising students, I help them with any problems they’ve had with the work, but beyond that, I want to take them further than their lectures and give them a deeper understanding of the subject. The best way to get the most out of a supervision is to come well-prepared, and be willing to interact with the supervisor and other students. Above all, be willing to ask questions!

Dr Amalio Fernandez-Pacheco

Fellow in Physics
Supporting your studies

Library
The Richard Powell Library is a 24-hour resource, with around 40,000 books and over 120 study spaces. It also provides access to all the online journals subscribed to by the University. The library contains the core textbooks for each undergraduate course, together with a wide range of general texts, periodicals and reference books. Most books can be borrowed. The collections are updated regularly, and students can recommend books to be bought. The library is also home to a collection of DVDs and music CDs, and a growing contemporary fiction section.

Awards and bursaries
Sidney Sussex has a range of financial awards available to support students in their studies. Foremost among these are the bursaries available to students from low income family backgrounds. In addition, there are grants to help cover essential study expenses such as specialised equipment, field trips, language courses and research for dissertations. Every year the College awards prizes to students who perform particularly well in University examinations.

Subject societies
Subject societies provide a way for students and Fellows to socialise together while learning more about their subject. Activities may include talks by Fellows, students or visiting speakers, field trips and visits to businesses or industry. We have thriving subject societies in Engineering, Geography, History, Law and Medicine, among others.

Study skills
Our academic support includes a structured programme of study skills sessions, which are designed to help students develop their learning habits and techniques. They are open to all students, and include topics such as academic note-taking, use of references and reading lists, essay writing and revision techniques.

Technology
All student rooms in College are networked, and students have unrestricted access to an extensive computer suite that is open 24 hours a day. In addition to PC workstations and an iMac, the computer suite has a range of printers and a scanner.

“Supervisions are an important part of your education at Cambridge. It’s OK to get things wrong in supervisions – at first I was really worried about what to say and needing to get everything right, but I soon realised that supervisors are there to help you, not to judge you. The point is to make the most of them and learn as much as you can – it’s a unique opportunity to learn from the experts.”

Jonathan Hooke
Natural Sciences (Physical)
Student life

Accommodation
All our undergraduates are housed in single bedroom, College-owned accommodation for the whole of their course. First-year students are allocated study-bedrooms in College or in Cromwell Court, which is just outside the main site. In other years, students choose their rooms in a ballot. Student rooms date from the late-sixteenth century to the present day, and are maintained and refurbished on a regular basis. All rooms are close to kitchens, bathrooms and laundry facilities. Kitchens are equipped with fridges and combination microwave ovens, and some also have full electric ovens and hobs. Weekly rents include heating, water, maintenance and cleaning, and students only pay rent for 30 weeks of the year.

We have a number of bedrooms suitable for students with disabilities. In addition, many rooms are served by lifts, and there is good disabled access to the Library and other public rooms.

Food
Meals are provided on a self-service basis in the beautiful Elizabethan dining hall. There is always a wide choice, including vegetarian options, and dining in College is excellent value for money. This means that most students eat in College at least once a day, which enhances the sense of community. On three evenings per week there is also the opportunity to have a more formal, candle-lit meal in Hall. These are popular occasions to meet with friends for a convivial evening, or to invite guests to the College. Our chefs have recently won several awards, and our formal halls are the envy of many other colleges.

Life beyond work
The undergraduate Common Room is equipped with satellite TV and DVD, and newspapers are delivered daily. There is also a bar run largely by the students themselves, which hosts parties and club nights several times each term.

Sidney Greats
The Sidney Greats seminar series is designed to give the College community the opportunity to learn more about classic texts and important ideas. These have ranged widely across the arts and sciences, from human rights law to Shakespeare, Newton to The Qur’an. Speakers from within and beyond College are invited to give a seminar in an approachable and interdisciplinary format, and the debate then continues over dinner in Hall.

Sports
Sports facilities include a squash court and recently refurbished gym on the main site, a large sports ground a ten-minute bike ride away, and a boathouse on the river Cam. Sidney has teams for athletics, squash, football, netball, tennis and rugby, among others, and there is also a thriving Boat Club. Both serious sportsmen and women, and those who just want to try something new or keep fit, will find a team to suit them.

Music and choir
Music lovers can attend the concerts and recitals organised by the Music Society, or join a number of instrumental and vocal ensembles. A practice room is available for use by students, and the College has several pianos and a drum kit. In the Chapel we have a Steinway grand piano, a harpsichord, a chamber organ and the main chapel organ.

A number of choral scholarships are available for members of the Choir, which is run by the Director of Music. In addition to singing Evensong in the Chapel, the Choir has made some acclaimed recordings and tours regularly in the UK and overseas. Recent tour destinations have included the United States, Germany and Dubai.

The Chapel
Our Chapel is a focus for the spiritual life of the College, and is open to students of all faiths and none. It is a special and popular place for prayer, meditation and quiet reflection. There are regular services in the Chapel, and everyone is welcome to attend. The Chapel is also home to Oliver Cromwell’s head, which is buried in a secret location.

On weekdays I’ll have a morning lecture, followed by reading for the week’s essay. I like to go to various libraries - it always feels like a treasure hunt! In the evening I go to Hall for dinner and catch up with friends. I’ve developed a love for Sidney’s salad bar. I get most of my work done early so that I can leave Saturday afternoons free for fun with societies, like the Sidney Music Society or the Ancient Literature Society. Working or socialising, there is never a dull moment.

Amber-Page Moss
Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic
While we hope that your time at Sidney will be happy and productive, we appreciate that there are times when students may need extra guidance or support. Our support network includes the Tutors, who are Fellows with special responsibility for pastoral care. The Chaplain is on hand to offer confidential advice and guidance, and the College Nurse has daily surgery hours in term-time. The Porters can offer practical advice on everything from finding your department to fixing your bike.

Financial support
We are committed to making sure that no student suffers from financial difficulties at Sidney Sussex. In addition to the University-wide Cambridge Bursary Scheme, the College is able to offer a number of income-related bursaries to support its students. Tutors and College staff are able to provide advice and guidance to students with money concerns, and there is also a welfare fund to assist students who find themselves in financial difficulties.

Environmental issues
Students, staff and Fellows have formed an active Environmental Committee, which reports on green and ethical issues. The College has good recycling facilities, and is committed to reducing its carbon footprint.

Life after Sidney
Your association with Sidney does not end when you graduate. Every student who joins the College becomes a member for life, and our old members (or alumni) are an important part of the Sidney community. Alumni receive newsletters keeping them informed about College life, and are invited back regularly for reunions, subject dinners and other events. This also benefits our current students, who are able to make contact with alumni working in fields they may be considering for their own careers.

"What still stands out at the end of my three years is how quickly I felt at home at Sidney. I didn’t really know what to expect coming down, as I didn’t know anyone who’d been to uni before, but I was only here a couple of hours before I’d made lots of the friends that I’m still close with today. Also there’s been no excuse to be bored! I’ve always had something new to try out, and often my friends have taken me along to plays; comedy or music nights which I wouldn’t have considered myself. Having finished my degree now, it’s very satisfying looking back and recognising the progress I’ve made over the three years, and I think that having the personal interaction and guidance from my Director of Studies and supervisors has been invaluable in that."

Sam Jackson
Geography
The Admissions team is here to help you through the entire admissions process – no question is too trivial! We can give you information to help you decide whether to apply, and guide you through the assessment and interviews. The best way to find out more is undoubtedly to visit us in person, and we look forward to welcoming you at one of our open days. If you cannot make it to Cambridge, we are happy to answer questions by telephone, email or post. We are also pleased to visit schools and colleges, to talk to groups of students and their teachers. We look forward to meeting you in the near future, and hope you will feel that Sidney Sussex is the place for you.

Find out more

We hope that this prospectus has given you an impression of the College, our ethos and the opportunities we offer our students. If you have any questions, or would like more detailed information, please contact our Admissions Office or visit our website. Information available includes:

- Details of our open days
- An alternative prospectus written by our students
- Information about the subjects you can study
- Information about financial support
- Advice for teachers and careers advisers

Our coat of arms, derived from that of Lady Frances Sidney, Countess of Sussex, includes a blue and gold porcupine, which is the emblem of the Sidney family. Today the porcupine has been adopted as a mascot by many of the College’s sports teams, as well as being featured on the Porters’ laces.

Photography by
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