

How Cambridge and Imperial actually use your ESAT score

The short answer

Cambridge uses your ESAT to decide who to interview. Imperial reads it with your UCAS application for interviews and offers. **Neither has a cut-off.**

The score moves through admissions, not around it

You get one score from 1.0 to 9.0 per module, and every ESAT course on your UCAS form sees them automatically.

1. You sit the modules required by the exact course.
2. UAT-UK sends the scores to that course automatically.
3. The university reads them with your application.
4. Where the course interviews, the score helps decide who is invited.

1 The tell

Anyone who says “Cambridge needs 6.5” is guessing. Imperial publishes past offer-holder averages by department; Cambridge publishes none.

Cambridge: four courses, one published policy

Four Cambridge courses use the ESAT for 2027 entry. Colleges use it to decide who to interview, and a strong performance is usually needed.

Course or department	Required modules	Published use or meaning
Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology	Mathematics 1, plus two from Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics 2	Helps pre-interview shortlisting; retained for the offer decision
Engineering	Mathematics 1, Mathematics 2 and Physics	Same University policy
Natural Sciences	Mathematics 1, plus two from Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics 2	Same University policy
Veterinary Medicine	Mathematics 1, plus two from Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics 2	Same University policy

Stronger scores in your course's modules make a stronger case.

Imperial: the modules change by department

Imperial reads your ESAT alongside your UCAS application when deciding interviews and offers.

Course or department	Required modules	Published use or meaning
Aeronautics	Mathematics 1, Mathematics 2, Physics	Three separate scores enter selection
Chemical Engineering	Mathematics 1, Mathematics 2, Chemistry	Chemistry replaces Physics
Civil and Environmental Engineering	Mathematics 1, Mathematics 2, Physics	Three separate scores enter selection
Dyson School of Design Engineering	Mathematics 1, Mathematics 2	Two scores, not an invented total
Electrical and Electronic Engineering	Mathematics 1, Mathematics 2, Physics	Test performance can contribute to interview shortlisting
Life Sciences	Mathematics 1, Chemistry, Biology	Biology and Chemistry are the course-facing sciences
Mechanical Engineering	Mathematics 1, Mathematics 2, Physics	Three separate scores enter selection
Physics	Mathematics 1, Mathematics 2, Physics	Three separate scores enter selection

Aeronautics, Design Engineering, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering interview, and use the test to shortlist.

2 Try it

From your course page, write down three things: the modules, whether it interviews, and what it reads before interview.

What an interview adds

The ESAT shows speed on fixed problems. An interview shows how you take a hint, explain a choice and recover from a wrong turn.

Worked example The one-line answer and the interview answer

Let

$$f(x) = \frac{x^3}{3} - 3x^2 + 8x, \quad 0 \leq x \leq 5.$$

Where does f attain its greatest value? First find every candidate, not just the first stationary point:

$$f'(x) = x^2 - 6x + 8 = (x - 2)(x - 4).$$

Compare $x = 0, 2, 4, 5$:

$$f(0) = 0, \quad f(2) = \frac{20}{3}, \quad f(4) = \frac{16}{3}, \quad f(5) = \frac{20}{3}.$$

$$x = 2 \text{ and } x = 5$$

Correct: for the multiple-choice mark, differentiate and compare stationary points with both endpoints.

Trap: choosing $x = 2$ as soon as f' changes from positive to negative misses the equal endpoint maximum.

The interview extension is the explanation: f' has signs $+, -, +$ across the interval, so $x = 2$ is a local maximum and $x = 4$ a local minimum; compactness means the endpoints must also be tested.

After results: what you control and what you do not

- **Scores appear in your UAT-UK account** about four weeks after the sitting.
- **Universities receive them automatically.** No need to send screenshots.
- **Shortlisted for Cambridge?** Practise solving unfamiliar problems aloud.
- **Imperial timelines vary by department.** A January sitting means later shortlisting.
- **A disappointing score is not a rejection.** Keep preparing until the university decides.