



Which universities' English Literature courses could I consider?

According to the Complete University Guide's league table, the top ten UK universities for studying English are:

1. Oxford
2. Cambridge
3. St. Andrew's
4. Durham
5. Warwick
6. UCL
7. York
8. Loughborough
9. Edinburgh
10. Strathclyde

According to The Guardian's league table, the top ten UK universities for studying English are:

1. St. Andrew's
2. Oxford
3. Durham
4. Cambridge
5. Warwick
6. UCL
7. Lancaster
8. Loughborough
9. Surrey
10. Edge Hill

According to the The Times and The Sunday Times' league table, the top ten UK universities for studying English are:

1. Oxford
2. St. Andrew's
3. Cambridge
4. UCL
5. Strathclyde
6. Warwick
7. York
8. Aberdeen
9. Exeter
10. Durham

How are calculations made?

They consider different criteria, for example:

- Entry standards (average UCAS tariff score)
- Student satisfaction
- Research quality
- Graduate prospects
- student-staff ratio
- Spend on academic services

What will you study?

- Courses vary so it's important to explore what different universities offer.

For example, at Oxford in your first year you study by period (Early Medieval, Victorian, and 1910-present day), whereas at Edinburgh in your first year you study works of literature written in English from around the world and you have a wide range of option courses, including business, economics and informatics, and philosophy, divinity and law. At Exeter, in your first year you study approaches to criticism, literature before 1800, 'Academic English' – and have options that include digital creativity, creative writing and being human in the modern world.

Whichever university you're interested in, you should spend time reading their course guides.

Why study English Literature?

- An Eng Lit degree teaches you to think critically about complex topics from different perspectives.
- It develops your appreciation of other cultures and intellectual traditions.
- It broadens your horizons.
- It enables you to develop transferable skills.
- Reading and analysing good books is good for your mental well-being. (“The Pick-me-up Papers” – see handout)

Testimony from a former Teddies student currently studying English Literature at Edinburgh University



Personal statement – what could you include?

- Wide reading
- Going to the theatre
- Listening to radio plays on BBC Radio 4 or 3
- Volunteering to hear children read or reading to children in a primary school
- Entering essay competitions in school (Kenneth Grahame) and nationally (Betty Haigh Shakespeare prize – deadline 1st September 2025)
- Entering poetry competitions, e.g. next year's Tower Poetry
- Learning poems by heart
- Helping with your Shell House play
- Subscribing (£10 a month) to BBC Maestro for an online creative writing course (writers range from Malorie Blackman and Julia Donaldson to Alan Moore and Jed Mercurio)
- Visiting art galleries to think about stories in art
- Writing reviews of books you read or plays you see
- Listening to podcasts e.g. Sam Leith's Book Club
- Starting a book club or a creative writing club at school
- Oxford University English Faculty has public bookable events (e.g. Professor of Poetry lectures)
- Oxford Centre for Life Writing (Wolfson College – most events and talks are free)

The Oxbridge System and Process

The Oxbridge Experience

- Collegiate System – esp. at Oxford
- Tutorials/Supervisions – **formative writing**
- 3 Year BA (other than joint honours)
- Exam-reliant
- (Relative!) ease of graduate progression

Oxford

- 3-year BA (4 if language joint honours)
- 2 distinct courses: Prelims (pass/fail) and FHS (degree classification)
- All papers mandatory (unless joint honours)

Prelims	FHS
1a: Introduction to Language	1: Shakespeare
1b: Introduction to Literature	2: Literature 1350 -1550
2: Literature 650 -1350	3: Literature 1550 - 1660
3: Literature 1830 -1910	4: Literature 1660 - 1760
4: Literature 1910 - Present	5: Literature 1760 - 1830
	6: Special Options
	7: Dissertation

Cambridge

- 3-year BA – no formal joint honours
- Continuously assessed
- More exams
- Greater choice/range of optional papers

Part IA	Part IB	Part II
Practical Criticism and Critical Practice	English Literature and its Contexts 1300 to 1550	Practical Criticism and Critical Practice II
Shakespeare	Period Paper 3	Tragedy
Period Paper 1 Period Paper 2		Dissertation
		2nd Dissertation/Option Paper
		Option Paper

NB: Period Paper options: 1066 – 1350, 1500 – 1700, 1660 – 1870, 1830 – 1945, 1870 – Present

The Process

1. Personal Statement; Additional Application form (Camb. only) (c. 15th Oct)
2. Admissions Test (late Oct)
3. Written Work (early/mid Nov)
4. Interviews (early Dec)

Action Points

- Reading!!
- Areas of Interest
- Unseen Practice
- Literary Theory/Criticism
- Meetings