Q&A for Applicants

Forty-eight answers taken from the nine Gates Cambridge pages, with the source named for each.

48	6	9	8
QUESTIONS ANSWERED	TOPIC AREAS	GATES PAGES USED	MISTAKES TO AVOID

48 questions on eligibility, rounds, the form, references, selection, interviews and funding, a final checklist and eight mistakes to avoid. Every answer comes from the nine Gates Cambridge pages (Programme and Apply sections), read on 21 October 2026. The Source column names the page. Where the site is silent, the answer says so and points you to info@gatescambridge.org. Check dates and amounts on the live pages before you act.

01 SECTION 1

Eligibility

#	QUESTION	ANSWER	SOURCE
1	Who can apply?	A citizen of any country outside the UK, applying to a PhD (full-time or part-time), an MLitt (full-time) or a one-year full-time postgraduate course, with some exceptions	Eligibility
2	I hold UK and another citizenship. Can I apply?	Yes. Dual citizens of the UK and another country are eligible	FAQ
3	Which courses are eligible?	MPhil, MLitt, MRes, LLM and PhD. Master's level degrees must be full-time. PhDs can be full-time or part-time	FAQ
4	Which courses are not eligible?	Undergraduate degrees, MASt, MSt, PGCert, PGDip, MBA, EMBA, MFin, Executive Master of Accounting, Business Doctorate, Doctor of Education, PGCE, MBBChir Clinical	Eligibility, FAQ

#	QUESTION	ANSWER	SOURCE
		Studies, MD, the Graduate Course in Medicine (A101) and the Master of Conservation of Easel Painting, plus any part-time degree other than the PhD	
5	Can I apply for a part-time course?	Only a part-time PhD. Gates is still piloting funding for part-time doctoral degrees. Master's applications must be full-time	Eligibility, FAQ
6	I already have a master's. Can I apply for another?	Yes. Give a strong justification for a second master's and check with the department that the course suits you and that you meet its criteria	FAQ
7	I am studying at Cambridge now. Can I apply?	Yes, for a new course, such as an MPhil student applying for a PhD. Current students are considered in the second, international round	Eligibility
8	I am part-way through a PhD. Can Gates fund the rest?	No. You cannot apply to fund the remainder of a course you have already started	Eligibility
9	Is there a minimum GPA?	No. Academic excellence is a criterion, and it is considered holistically across the application and references	FAQ
10	Do I need an English language test for Gates?	Gates has no English test requirement. The University of Cambridge does, so check the Postgraduate Admissions Office guidance	FAQ

02 SECTION 2

Rounds and dates

#	QUESTION	ANSWER	SOURCE
11	How many rounds are there?	Two: an earlier round for US citizens resident in the USA, and a later round for all other eligible applicants	Timeline

#	QUESTION	ANSWER	SOURCE
12	I am a US citizen living abroad. Which round?	The later round. US citizens studying or working overseas at the time of application apply there	Timeline
13	I am a US citizen in the US and missed October 2026. Can I use the later round?	No. US citizens resident in the US must apply in October and are not eligible for the later round, so you would wait for the next cycle	Timeline
14	What is the deadline in the main round?	Set by your course in the Course Directory: either Tuesday 8 December 2026 or Wednesday 6 January 2027, with every document submitted by 11:59pm UK time	Timeline
15	When will I hear whether I am invited to interview?	US round: by Monday 14 December 2026. Main round: by Monday 8 March 2027. Admission is reviewed separately, so you may get an admission decision first	Timeline, FAQ
16	When are the panels and offers?	US round: panels 22 and 23 January 2027, offers by early February. Main round: panels 22 and 23 March 2027, offers by early April. You have 72 hours to accept	Timeline
17	If I am rejected, can I apply again?	Yes. A previous unsuccessful application does not affect how you are considered in future, by Gates or other funders	FAQ

03 SECTION 3

The application form

#	QUESTION	ANSWER	SOURCE
18	How do I apply?	One combined application through the University's Graduate Application Portal, covering admission and funding	How to apply
19	What must I complete to be considered?	The admission section (course and College place) and the Gates Cambridge part of the funding section. Gates can see the full application	How to apply

#	QUESTION	ANSWER	SOURCE
20	What are the four Gates questions?	Academic excellence (about 200 words), why this course and how it facilitates your plans (about 200), commitment to improving the lives of others (about 300), and capacity for leadership (about 300)	How to apply
21	Are the limits in words or characters?	Both are stated: about 200 words up to 1,400 characters, and about 300 words up to 2,100 characters. Treat the character count as the hard cap	How to apply
22	What are the four questions for?	They help Gates distinguish between candidates already nominated by departments, and are the only part of the form where you are specifically asked about fit with Gates	How to apply
23	Is there a right answer to them?	No. Use specific examples from your background, achievements, experiences and future plans, and reflect widely on your values	How to apply
24	Do I need a research proposal?	PhD applicants only. Most upload it for admission. If the course application does not ask for one, you need one for Gates	How to apply, FAQ
25	Do I need a confirmed supervisor before applying?	Gates does not require it, but advises you to check the department can support your interests. The Criteria page expects PhD and most research MPhil applicants to contact a potential supervisor	FAQ, Criteria
26	How many applications can I make?	As many as you make eligible course applications. In 2025/6 the maximum was 7, and a withdrawn application still counted. Each needs its own Gates funding section. Check the current cap	FAQ
27	Can I edit after submitting?	No	FAQ
28	Does Gates pay the application fee?	No. The Postgraduate Admissions Office administers fee waivers	FAQ

References

#	QUESTION	ANSWER	SOURCE
29	How many references do I need?	Two academic references for admission, plus one Gates Cambridge reference on how you meet the scholarship criteria	How to apply
30	Who should write the Gates reference?	Someone of appropriate standing who can speak with authority and who understands the criteria, the competition and Cambridge's standards. Examples: an academic advisor, an employer, a senior member of an organisation where you volunteered	How to apply
31	Can one of my academic referees also write it?	Yes, if they know your personal qualities and write specifically about the Gates criteria rather than a third academic reference	How to apply, FAQ
32	What does the form ask the referee?	Your suitability on four criteria, how highly they rank you, the group they rank you against, the group's size, and a rating of exceptional, strong, not strong or weak. Up to 4,000 characters, or an uploaded letter	How to apply
33	Who should not write it?	A friend, a family member or anyone unable to comment on your suitability. All referees must submit by the deadline, and you must brief the Gates referee on the criteria	How to apply

05 SECTION 5

Selection and interviews

#	QUESTION	ANSWER	SOURCE
34	How does selection work?	Two stages. Departments nominate a small number of eligible applicants who meet all four criteria to a very high level, then all nominees are interviewed and Scholars are selected after interview	How we select
35	How many applicants are	The site says a relatively small number, and gives no figure. Ask info@gatescambridge.org if you need more	How we select

#	QUESTION	ANSWER	SOURCE
	nominated?		
36	What is the interview like?	25 to 30 minutes, with one of four subject panels: Arts, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences or Social Sciences. Panels include experienced academics and practitioners and may include alumni and a Trust representative	How we select
37	What are the four sections?	Welcome and introduction; Gates Cambridge (what you know, motivation, why you could be a Scholar, the responsibilities of a full-cost scholarship); academic and career plans, possibly with probing ethical questions; and final thoughts and optional questions	How we select
38	Can I interview online?	Yes. Panels are experienced with online interviews and aim to give online candidates the same opportunity, though in-person is encouraged where you can attend	FAQ, How we select
39	Does Gates pay interview expenses?	One night of accommodation and parking, if required	FAQ
40	What if I am nominated for more than one course?	You are interviewed once and will be asked which course to progress with	FAQ
41	Will I get feedback?	No. Gates gives no feedback to unsuccessful applicants, including those interviewed, and cannot provide recognition letters	FAQ, How we select

06 SECTION 6

Funding and life as a Scholar

#	QUESTION	ANSWER	SOURCE
42	What does it cover?	The University Composition Fee, a maintenance allowance, one economy single airfare at the start and end, and inbound visa costs plus the Immigration Health Surcharge	The scholarship

#	QUESTION	ANSWER	SOURCE
43	How much is the maintenance allowance?	£23,152 for 12 months at the 2026-27 rate for a single student, pro rata for shorter courses. For PhD Scholars, up to 4 years	The scholarship
44	Can I hold another scholarship?	Yes, but not with duplicate funds such as two maintenance payments. The Trust will agree shared funding. If you receive a salary or another substantial scholarship, the Trust may reduce or withhold maintenance, so tell it promptly	FAQ, The scholarship
45	Is there help for children or a partner?	Up to £12,793 a year for one child and up to £18,244 for two or more, on application. No funding is provided for a partner	The scholarship
46	What discretionary funding exists?	Academic development funding of up to £750 to £4,000 by course length, fieldwork maintenance for PhD students, maternity or paternity intermission of up to 6 months with maintenance, and hardship funding	The scholarship
47	What is not covered?	Bench fees and the costs of scientific equipment or similar resources. The Trust expects the department to cover core course costs	The scholarship
48	What is the community like?	About 250 Scholars are in Cambridge at any time, with orientation, a welcome dinner, professional development through Learning for Purpose, an annual lecture, a gala, symposia, a Scholars' Room and a Scholars' Council. Alumni (1,700+ from 116 countries) stay connected through Gates Connect and events	The experience, The scholarship

Questions the site does not answer

The pages do not state a position on these, so confirm them before relying on any assumption. Email info@gatescambridge.org.

- How many applicants are nominated and interviewed each year.
- Whether a Scholar can defer the start of the award.
- The Trust's policy on using AI tools when writing answers.

- Whether information webinars are running this cycle. The FAQ said they would begin in summer 2026.

08 SECTION 7

Final checklist

- [ ] I am a non-UK citizen (or a dual citizen) and my round is confirmed
- [ ] My course is eligible, full-time (or a PhD), and not already under way
- [ ] I know my Course Funding Deadline and I plan to submit a week early
- [ ] I completed the admission section and the Gates funding section
- [ ] My four answers are within about 200, 200, 300 and 300 words, and inside the character caps
- [ ] My research proposal is ready (PhD) and I have contacted supervisors
- [ ] Two academic referees and one Gates referee are briefed and have confirmed dates
- [ ] Every name, number and spelling is checked
- [ ] I have prepared for the interview, with a story bank and a view on the scholarship's responsibilities
- [ ] I have a plan if I am not selected: other funding and a possible reapplication

09 SECTION 8

Eight mistakes to avoid

1. **Using the wrong round or deadline.** US citizens in the US who miss October cannot use the later round, and everyone else follows the Course Funding Deadline.

2. **Applying to an ineligible course.** MASt, MSt, PGDip, MBA and part-time masters are not funded.
3. **Neglecting the admission application.** The department nominates first.
4. **Repeating your transcript in Question 1.** The panel already has it.
5. **Praising Cambridge in Question 2.** Give specific, checkable reasons.
6. **Listing activities in Question 3 or titles in Question 4.** Show a change in people's lives and a decision you made.
7. **Choosing a referee for prestige.** Choose someone who can rank you against a real group and speak first-hand.
8. **Submitting late, or relying on editing.** Everything, references included, is due by 11:59pm UK time, and you cannot edit after submitting.