

Personal Statement

A degree in mathematics is the next logical step in my engagement with the discipline. From a young age it has been my strongest area academically, and from this strength developed a deep interest. Though I have achieved well in and enjoyed the analytical thinking of my History and English A-levels, I feel that this combination of talent and enthusiasm make me an ideal candidate for studying maths at university. My attendance of the Sutton Trust summerschool at Cambridge University gave me a valuable insight into university life, and made me realise how suited to its independence of living, as well as study, I am.

Though I am fascinated by standard applied mathematics, it is the application of pure mathematics to situations in the natural world that interests me most. Lobachevsky said “There is no branch of mathematics, however abstract, which may not someday be applied to the phenomena of the real world”, implying a deeper connection between nature and mathematics than the human race knows. The idea that an insect emerges every thirteen or seventeen years to breed (as cicadas do) so as to avoid predators emerging at regular intervals is a mind-blowing side-effect of natural selection and one that intrigues me profoundly.

I have twice competed in UKMT Mathematical Challenges, achieving a gold award in the intermediate and a silver award in the advanced and winning 'best in school' both times. I believe this reflects my natural ability in the subject as it is not something that can be revised for, but is more a test of initiative and flair. It was this initiative and flair that allowed me to reach the semi-final of the game show Countdown in 2005, on the way to which I won nine games and regularly beat Carol Vorderman at numbers.

Whilst my primary reason for taking a gap year is to raise funds, I feel that it would be a useful opportunity to study more A-level mathematics and further mathematics units. This would serve the dual purpose of making me a more accomplished mathematician as well as better preparing me for the independent learning that will be expected of me in university. A job in a field close to mathematics during this time would obviously be a bonus, and should be realistic given my family ties to banking.

Outside of the academic realm my interests are eclectic. I have captained my school in football and cricket, and have been given the opportunity to represent Essex in both. I was a founding member of my school's debating team and Warhammer club, both of which now thrive. I play tournament Scrabble and Countdown in my spare time, as well as poker, the mathematical element of which I find very interesting.