Hello, I’m Kirsty Hughes, and I’m here to talk to you about the application process. The reason that I have been asked to come and talk to you about the applications process is that I’m a lecturer in law, but I am also the admissions tutor at Clare College. So I deal with admissions at Clare. Admissions, as you probably know, at Cambridge is a matter for each of the colleges. So, each college has its own admissions procedure, but they are all broadly the same and that is that you have to submit your UCAS form by the 15th October. When you submit your UCAS form, you will be asked to fill in what we call a supplementary questionnaire and that asks you for some further details. You have about a week to do this after the 15th October, so you need to be aware that you will be asked to do that. It is fairly straightforward. The main things that we ask you for in the supplementary questionnaire are details of your AS module marks, if you are somebody who is doing AS and A2, and there’s also some further boxes where you can provide further information about why you’re applying for that particular course at Cambridge. So, it’s fairly straightforward, but you do need to make sure that you’re on top of it, so that you know that you have to do that in October.

Then what happens after that is that your applications will go to the college and they’ll be reviewed by the admissions tutors in those colleges and they will look to see whether or not you should be called for interview. In general, at Cambridge, we interview probably about 90% to 95% of applicants and, if you are somebody who looks like you would be on track to meet our standard offer, which for A-Levels is an A* and two As, then you are somebody who we will call for interview. If you look like you may not meet the standard offer, then we will obviously look at your application and see whether we actually think it’s still worth calling you for interview and it’s very important, therefore, that you provide us with as much information as possible so that we can assess your application fairly. There is an extenuating circumstances form that you must fill in if there are circumstances that you need to bring to our attention. That can be anything to do with medical issues, it can be things to do with problems that you may have had at school or at home, and there are a number of different things that you should consider whether you should fill in on that form. Therefore, you need to make sure that you have a look at the extenuating circumstances form and that is something that you should discuss with your teachers as well, to see whether they can assist you with that.

So, that all takes place towards the end of October, the beginning of November. Then, basically, all you do during that time after you’ve done the supplementary questionnaire is wait to hear from us and, if you are called for interview, then you will be sent details of what the interview process is going to be. Now, because it’s a college matter, each college can have its own variation. So, you need to look at each college website to see precisely what they’ll do, but they are all broadly the same, which is that, generally, there are two interviews and you may be asked to do a law test as well. That will take place either at the very end of November or the first week or two of December. You will come to Cambridge and you will be seen in Cambridge in the college, usually by Fellows of that college, and they will interview you. I can’t speak for the interviews of all colleges, but I can tell you a little bit about the interviews at Clare, just to give you an example. When we interview at Clare, what we do is we give you a number of little
scenarios to look at and we get you to reason through them. You don’t need to have any prior legal knowledge. What we’re looking for is to see how you can approach these situations, what your skills are, what your analytical skills are and how you can deal with things when you’re given further information. So, that’s the type of scenario that we will deal with at interview but, as I say, it can be different for different colleges, so you need to look carefully at their websites for that.

Then what happens after the interview is that the Fellows will make a decision, in consultation with the admissions tutor for the college, as to whether or not to offer you a place and there are essentially three things which can happen at that stage. You can either be made an offer, in which case you will probably find out at the start of January, it will be after the New Year when the letters go out; or unfortunately, they may decide not to continue with your application at that stage; or they can put you into the pool and the pool is very important, because what that means is that other colleges get an opportunity to look at your application. Therefore, when you are deciding as to which college to apply for, you don’t have to worry about whether that college is going to get a lot more applications than that college because if your application is good and you perform well, but you apply to a college where perhaps there wasn’t enough places, then you can still be considered by the other colleges in the pool. So, it all balances out that way through the pool system, and the pool takes place in January. However, if you are put into the pool, it will take a little bit longer for you to have the final outcome. If you are put into the pool there is no guarantee that you will be given a place because more people go into the pool than we eventually generally have places for, but you will be considered at that stage, again by the other colleges.

Therefore, by the end of January everyone should know either way whether they’ve been made an offer of a place or not and the people that have been made an offer of a place, essentially, then you have to accept the offer. Other than that, you just have to continue with your studies and, hopefully, it will all come good and you will then matriculate in October. If you don’t meet your offer, then it will go back to the admissions tutors within the college and they will consider whether or not they can still allow you into the college, having missed your offer, and that will depend on a number of factors. It will depend on the reasons why you didn’t make the offer and it will depend on whether they actually have space in the college at that point.

So, that is just a kind of overview of what the application process looks like, but I want to leave plenty of time for you to ask questions. So, now it’s over to you to ask any questions that you may have.