

The British University Before And During The Nineteenth Century

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February 1999

At the end of the eighteenth century there were two universities in England with four in Scotland. These being:

Oxford	12th Century
Cambridge	1318
Glasgow	1451
St Andrews	1463
Aberdeen	1494
Edinburgh	1583

The nineteenth century saw an increase in the number of English universities, along with a university for Wales, these were:

Durham	1832
London	1836
Manchester	1851
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne	1852
Wales	1893

Before the nineteenth century the education provided in European universities had seen very little change since universities were first established in the middle ages.

Initially students would attend four years of study in grammar, dialectic and rhetoric (the trivium) along with arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music (the quadrivium). This would give them a degree in the faculty of arts. After this basic degree they could then go on to read one of the following three specialist subjects, theology, medicine or law. On completing these higher studies a student would then graduate with a doctorate. The above style of

university education was at the time deemed sufficient enough to equip people with the necessary knowledge that would allow them to take up the more responsible positions in society, such as a lawyer or physician. Universities during this time did not see themselves as research institutions that they were to become from the nineteenth century onwards. Rather they kept very much to their original curriculum's that were established in the thirteenth century. Oxford and Cambridge were to resist any of the proposed educational reforms as laid out by the various Government commissions in the nineteenth century. This was particularly so at Oxford. The Scottish universities on the other hand did broaden the education they had to offer to students by including the newly developed sciences such as physics and chemistry. Where chemistry was offered, it was usually as a sub-discipline in the school of medicine.

Thus up until the nineteenth century very few universities offered the opportunity to study a pure science-based degree as we would know them today. Therefore it was not possible to graduate in a purely scientific discipline as today, for example in physics and chemistry.

Many students who attended university before the nineteenth century did not go on and complete

their basic degrees, with many also not going on to obtain their higher degrees after successfully completing their basic degrees. One of the major causes for students not completing their studies was financial, for during this time there was no state funding for university education. Therefore, students were required to pay their own fees.

Before and during the nineteenth century the entrance requirements to study at Oxford or Cambridge were heavily restricted, and were not based purely on academic ability like they are today at the end of the twentieth century.

Both Oxford and Cambridge required potential students to have attended either one of the nine public schools: Eton, Harrow, Westminster, Rugby, St Paul's, Shrewsbury, Winchester, Charterhouse, Merchant Taylors. If a student was unable to attend one of the above public schools, then they would have attended either one of the many grammar schools, or one of the newly founded private or proprietary schools that came to be established

from the 1840's. The aim of these new schools was in order that the educational requirements needed by those whose sons would be entering into the world of trade and commerce would be catered for. Besides the above schooling Oxford also required its students to have subscribed to the Thirty-nine Articles of Faith as laid down by the Church of England. This made Oxford an exclusively Anglican institution. Cambridge applied this religious bar at a later stage of a student's graduation.

In many ways the life and education a student experienced at university in the eighteenth century was very much an extension of the previous education they would have received at their public or grammar school, with no formal examination at the end of their studies as there would be today.

Oxford and Cambridge did not offer formal public lectures as the Scottish universities did, instead they concentrated on giving their students individual tuition.

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