



Varvara Vassilieva has won a spot at the prestigious Cambridge University. PICTURE: CALUM ROBERTSON

SHE is originally from Russia, speaks five languages and reads philosophy for fun.

Now Adelaide teen Varvara Vassilieva has won a place at Cambridge University to study politics.

But getting in was not easy.

The Walford graduate, who was her school's top International Baccalaureate student, says the "long and daunting" application process stretched over six months.

It required essays, personal statements focused on academic interests, an entrance

exam and a trip to the UK in December for a gruelling interview.

"You get asked very difficult philosophical (questions) you have to battle with, and with your interviewer rebutting your arguments. It really makes you think on the spot," the 18-year-old says. "There were two, both of whom were professors at the university in the subjects I was applying for. I was so overwhelmed by their intellect. It was incredible."

Ms Vassilieva, who will live in Cambridge's Christ's Col-

lege when she makes the move in September for her three-year degree, originally set her mind on Oxford.

But students are allowed to apply for only one of the "Oxbridge" unis and she felt her weakness in economics would hurt her chances at Oxford.

The Felixstow resident moved to Australia when she was three.

She makes annual trips to visit her grandparents in Moscow and is "fully bilingual", speaking Russian at home.

**- Tim Williams**