



# UCAS HANDBOOK 2022-2023



## Introduction

Your son and/or daughter will soon be asked to make three very important career choices. They will have to decide whether to go to University, which course to take and where to study.

This booklet is designed to help students make those choices. It offers guidance on how to research courses and choice of university. Students aiming for Oxbridge, Medicine and Law need to be aware of the admissions procedures for those particular courses.

There is advice on how to write a personal statement. The quality of a student's personal statement and their predicted grades are influential as to whether a student is offered a place and what grades/points an institution may require. The question of open days, taking a gap year and student finance are also addressed in this booklet.

**Mr S El Sayed**



# Ashmole Higher Education timeline:

## **KEY DATE: 28<sup>th</sup> March - 1<sup>st</sup> mentor meeting: Making decisions**

- Choosing a University
- The Academic Issues
- Application Process for Students
- The UCAS Tariff
- Applying to Oxford or Cambridge
- Art and Design Applications
- Taking a Gap Year

## **KEY DATE: 2<sup>nd</sup> May – complete UCAS application form**


- How to complete your UCAS Form

## **KEY DATE: 9<sup>th</sup> May - 2<sup>nd</sup> mentor meeting: writing your Personal Statement**

- Advise on how to structure your personal statement

## **KEY DATE: 12<sup>th</sup> July – complete personal statement**

### **Year 13**

- Open Days
  - UCAS What happens next?
  - University interviews
  - Clearing
  - Websites to explore
- 



UCAS (the University and Colleges Admission Service) is the body that organises all the applications to Universities and other Further Education Institutions including Art schools, except for Foundation courses. The actual decisions about who will be made offers and accepted as students are made by the academic staff in the universities and colleges concerned.

UCAS does not make decisions; it is an organisation that processes applications and advises of the decisions made by the universities.

When applying to UCAS you will be given a number and password. You will need to use this number every time you contact UCAS or an individual university.

They will be looking for students who have the intellectual ability to cope with the course, have the right attitude and necessary motivation and who will contribute well to the life of the university or college. In particular they want students who will participate in classes and tutorials, are likely to accept an offer if it is made, and are in line for the type of exam grades the course concerned generally commands.

Admissions criteria profiles on university websites often give a clear statement of the grade and other requirements universities are looking for from applicants. You can see these profiles at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com). They are very important and you must check them before applying. They will help you know what to write in your application.

Just because your predicted grades are in line with the standard offer a university makes does not mean that you will automatically receive an offer. Many departments/universities have far more good candidates than they have places to offer.

In some subjects the department or faculty will decide that its students need a particular qualification in order to cope with the course but very often grade or points requirements are simply a means of rationing places, and high grades may be an indication of popularity, not necessarily of quality.

A level's carry grades or points as shown on the UCAS tariff sheet, that can be found further on in this booklet. Some universities will use the tariff, others will make grade offers. You will need to think very carefully about any offers made to you before you make your firm and insurance decision in May of your Year 13.

The quality of the application is a crucial factor in gaining a place in Higher Education. An application has the highest chance of succeeding if it is;

Well prepared – evidence of commitment to your chosen courses, including academic ability and potential, needs to be acquired **NOW**

Well researched - [www.woodyswebwatch.com](http://www.woodyswebwatch.com) is a very useful website as it has direct links to most of the higher education and careers site on the internet. Start here and you will save yourself a lot of time;

Systematically organised – early applications have the best chance of a successful outcome, and keeping to school deadlines is critically important;

Realistic – academic achievements and predictions must be consistent with course requirements

Well informed – an application should not include only those institutions for which there is the most demand.

When you have completed the application, you can then use TRACK to monitor decisions on line. If you fail to receive any offers you can then apply on line using UCAS Extra from March 2023.

## **Key Date: 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022 – 1<sup>st</sup> Mentor Meeting Making Decisions**

### **Choosing a University**

By deciding on a course you'll have narrowed down the choices available. However, there may be many universities or colleges that offer a course that appeals to you, especially if you are considering a popular subject such as English or History.

Most students have some idea of the location they want to be in – whether it's in the south of England, by the sea, miles away or close to home. Many opt for somewhere that's far enough away from their families to be independent but not too far to get home in a crisis, usually two-three hours drive. When you've found five to ten universities that appeal to you, you'll need to find out more about them.

You will have the opportunity to apply for 5 universities. Each university have a comprehensive and formative website which also might include virtual tours. Have a look through these as well as looking through prospectuses. Prospectuses are free.

**Please note that it is very important to ensure when choosing your university that you are realistic in terms of your academic ability.**

### **How do I find out about universities?**

University websites, prospectuses and entry profile on the UCAS website are good places to start finding out more, but by far the best way to get a feel for a university is to visit. Before you fill in your UCAS form, look out for open days, campus tours, taster sessions and master classes. This will give you a taste of what the university is really like and current students will often be on hand to answer your questions.

Once you receive an offer from a university you may also be invited to an interview or visit day. It's important to visit your first two accepted choices – your firm and insurance choices.

### **Questions to answer when researching universities**

- Is it a campus or non-campus university?
- How far away from home is the university?
- Are the transport links good?
- What sort of location would you like to be in? For example, a country town or large city.
- Is there part-time work available? Does the university offer help in finding work?
- What bursaries/scholarships do they offer?
- What's the university's reputation like? League tables published by national newspapers will give you an indication of teaching quality and graduate employability.
- How many students attend the university? Is this important?
- How does the course compare with similar courses at other universities?
- What is the accommodation like? Do they guarantee student accommodation for all 1<sup>st</sup> year students?
- What are the study facilities like? For example, libraries and IT facilities.
- How good are the social and sporting facilities?
- What student support is available? For example, medical financial and disability support. Will you need special support, such as dyslexia support?

### **Academic issues**

#### **What is the application procedure?**

- Does it involve an interview?
- Will you have to produce a portfolio? E.g. for Art/Design or Architecture.
- Will you have to undertake an audition? E.g. for Music or Drama.
- Will you have to produce marked work, undertake a test assignment at the time of the interview or any other application procedure?
- How many other applicants are there generally?
- What are the typical entry grades required?
- Will you have to take any special admissions tests?

#### **What is the reputation of the University? Department? Course?**

- Are there established contacts with research agencies and professional bodies? Do your research.

## The UCAS Tariff Points System

Extended Project Qualification	GCE & VCE AS levels	GCE & VCE A levels	Tariff	BTEC (QCF) Extended Diploma	BTEC (QCF) Diploma	BTEC (QCF) Subsidiary Diploma	BTEC (QCF) Certificate
			168	D*D*D*			
			160	D*D*D			
			152	D*DD			
			144	DDD			
			128	DDM			
			112	DMM	D*D*		
			104		D*D		
			96	MMM	DD		
			80	MMP	DM		
			64	MPP	MM		
		A*	56			D*	
		A	48	PPP	MP	D	
		B	40				
		C	32		PP	M	
A*			28				D*
A		D	24				D
B	A		20				
C	B	E	16			P	M
D	C		12				
	D		10				
E			8				P
	E		6				



## Choosing a Course

There are over 55,000 higher education courses listed in the UCAS directory, offered at over 35 higher education institutions, including 128 universities. With so many available, choosing a course can be a difficult decision.

### Understanding Degrees:

Single subject courses:

Two subject courses with equal weighting – 50% each:

Two, three or four subjects studied together:

Two subject with unequal weighting e.g. 75% 25%:

**Single Honours degrees.**

**Joint Honours degrees.**

**Combined degrees.**

**Major/Minor degrees.**

There are a number of courses that are modular based. This means students will be able to choose modules of different subjects to build up the course to suit their own needs.

### Types of Degree Courses:

A degree course that is 3 or 4 years long is where a graduate will obtain a Bachelor's degree. A Bachelor's degree can have different titles (according to the nature of the subject):

**BA**

**BSc**

**Bed**

**BEng**

**Bachelor of Arts**

**Bachelor of Science**

**Bachelor of Education**

**Bachelor of Engineering**

### Sandwich Courses

Some courses include a year of working within industry as part of the course. This will usually be for the third year of the degree. The purpose of this is to introduce students to the world of work, whilst gaining valuable experience in a profession they might consider after completing their Higher Education course. Students undertaking sandwich placements generally achieve a higher-level degree pass as they are able to apply what they are learning to the work environment.

### Art Foundation Diploma

Many students complete a one-year Art Foundation Diploma after Year 13 if they are considering taking an Art or Design related degree. Some Art degrees require this Foundation Diploma in addition to A Levels for entry. This course gives the students the opportunity to try different areas of Art that they may not have been able to access at school, such as ceramics, textiles, sculpture, photography etc.

### Two-year degree courses in the UK

There are a number of UK universities that offer two-year fast track degrees which provide the same level of academic content as traditional 3-year degree programmes. Completing a degree in 2 years means lower tuition fees and living costs, plus the opportunity to begin your career a year sooner.



With many two-year degree programmes having different entry requirements and application processes

### **These tips may help you decide:**

- Think about what you enjoy and do well, both at school and outside.
- Write down a list of jobs you would like to do and why.
- Discuss your options with your UCAS Mentor, Ms Ocloo, family and friends.
- Whatever your interests, it is essential that you do lots of research.

### **How do I find out about course?**

- UCAS website – [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)
- University websites
- League tables to help you investigate which universities are best for particular courses: <http://education.guardian.co.uk> and [www.timesonline.co.uk/education](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/education)
- visit universities to get an idea of what courses involve. Most universities hold open days, master classes and taster sessions.

### **Points to remember when researching courses**

- what are the courses options? How does the course content vary between universities?
- How long is the course?
- How is the course assessed? How much of the course is assessed by final exam, coursework or ongoing assessment?
- How is the course taught? What is the ratio of formal lectures and seminars to independent study? Is there a final year dissertation/research project?
- Are there opportunities to carry put a work placement or study abroad for part of your course?
- Is it possible to study more than one subject (combined degree) or study a few modules from other courses, for example languages or IT?
- What sorts of jobs do graduates from the course go on to do?
- What are the entry requirements? Make sure the entry requirements are in line with your predicted grades. If you are at all unsure, speak to your UCAS Mentor or Ms Ocloo



### **Accommodation**

Prospectuses should explain what is available and at what cost. Most, but not all institutions have a policy of guaranteeing accommodation to first year student and its convenience in terms of location and facilities vary widely.

- Would your preference be a Hall of Residence (sometimes with catering provided and therefore more expensive) or a house/flat, usually self catering?
- What happens during vacations? What sort of deposit is required? Does your rent include heating costs? Is insurance extra?

### **Social facilities**

The Student Union aims to support the social life of students and to represent their interests. Most unions have their own buildings with bars, fast food outlets, cafes, bank, shops etc. You should also think about:

- What societies and clubs are available?
- What facilities exist for sport, music or drama?
- Will you need personal transport? If so, how easy will it be to keep a car/bicycle etc.
- Most universities make special arrangements to welcome new students with a “freshers” week.



### **Other facilities**

#### **What are the Library and Information research facilities?**

All courses will require students to use libraries and some specialised areas will need equally specialised facilities. How accessible are these?

#### **Is there an effective Careers service?**

- What arrangements are there to meet prospective employers?
- Will there be assistance in applying for jobs and preparing for interview?
- Are all students offered individual interviews and support?

#### **Will you be able to get part-time work?**

- Some courses require you to set up your own relevant part time work. Is this readily available and how much help will you get?

#### **Is there a welfare/pastoral/student support system?**

- Can it provide help with health, financial or personal problems?
- Will you have a personal tutor?
- What arrangements are made to help new students settle in?

#### **Recommended for further research:**

The UCAS website at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

<http://education.independant.co.uk>

[www.educationguardian.co.uk](http://www.educationguardian.co.uk) – league table of different subjects and profiles of different universities.

[www.timesonline.co.uk](http://www.timesonline.co.uk)

[www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)

You'll be investing a great deal of time and money in your degree so make sure that you make an informed choice. Of the students who drop out of higher education in their first year, the majority do so because they have chosen the wrong course or the wrong university for them, so do your homework!

### **Research, Courses and Advice**

There are over 50,000 possible course combinations to choose from, so where do you start? Students can look through the course search on the UCAS website to get a good idea of what courses are on offer. Students can also get information from the university's prospectus. Some subjects can be combined; some students choose to combine a subject with a foreign language with the opportunity of spending an extra year abroad. There's also the option of studying a subject that offers a sandwich year: the course is spread over four years, one of which is spent working in industry- and earning a salary.

Most students choose a subject that they are familiar with and enjoy at A level. It's imperative to check the content at degree level to make sure it is the right course.

Some students choose to study a 'new' subject. There are examples across the disciplines here and students are advised to talk this through with their UCAS mentor.

Students should check the grades/points required for the course choices and these should be in line with student's predictions. Students should be realistic about what they might achieve but they must also be positive and aim high for at least one or two of their selections with one or two 'safeguards' where the grades/points are a little lower.

For career planning advice see UCAS site [www.ucas.co.uk](http://www.ucas.co.uk),  
[www.ukcoursefinder.co.uk](http://www.ukcoursefinder.co.uk)

In recent years some Universities have introduced tests for some of the courses they offer. For all of these tests students will need to register on-line; for UKCAT this is done individually through the Pearson group, for BMAT, students register through the school. For all of these tests, students need to access sample questions and past papers on the relevant websites (details given below) to prepare adequately.

## Applying to Oxford or Cambridge

Oxford and Cambridge are regarded as the best universities in the country and a degree from these universities is highly prestigious. The competition for places is fierce and students who wish to apply should be predicted grade A in all A level subjects. The application to Oxford or Cambridge has to be completed by 15<sup>th</sup> October although the school recommends that applications are submitted by the end of September.

### A collegiate university: who does what?

Oxford and Cambridge are 'collegiate' universities. This means that they comprise:

- ✦ various faculties and departments in different academic subjects
- ✦ a number of Colleges

Both universities are organised in the following way:

University:	The Colleges:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Determines course content</li><li>▪ Organises lectures, seminars, practicals and projects Sets and marks</li><li>▪ examinations</li><li>▪ Awards degrees</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Are responsible for the admission of undergraduate students Organise</li><li>▪ small-group teaching (supervisions/tutorials)</li><li>▪ Are responsible for academic and pastoral care</li><li>▪ Offer accommodation, places to eat and recreational facilities</li></ul>

### Courses at Cambridge:

One of the most distinctive characteristics of Cambridge courses (also called Triposes) is that they cover the subject area very broadly in the initial years and then offer a wide range of options in which to specialise in the later years.

Students with a clear sense of the subject they wish to pursue at university can specialise, while those who are less certain are able to explore the wider subject area before deciding what to focus on.

### Course structure

Courses are divided into 'Parts', with each Part lasting one or two years. You must pass exams in two Parts to graduate with an Honours degree. Engineering and some science subjects also have a Part III that leads to an MEng or MSci degree.

### Teaching methods:

Your faculty or department arranges lectures, seminars and practicals that students from all Colleges attend together. Your College also arranges supervisions (regular small group tuition with subject specialists) for you.

However, as at all universities, there is a much greater emphasis on independent and self-directed study here compared to school or college. You are responsible for your own learning and are expected to read beyond what's required for your lectures and classes.

### **Courses at Oxford:**

Oxford offers more combinations of subjects than Cambridge. E.g Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE); Psychology, Philosophy and Physiology (PPP); Engineering, Economics and Management (EEM); Physics and Philosophy.

### **Tutorial teaching:**

'Tutor' is Oxford's name for a member of academic staff. They are experts in their field, and tutorials are a chance to get individualised teaching from them. At least once a week in each subject studied, groups of two or three students will spend an hour with their tutor, discussing a topic in depth. This personalised attention means that you will face rigorous academic challenges on a weekly basis, encouraging and facilitating your learning in a way that just isn't possible in a lecture. It also means that tutors are immediately aware if you need any extra support with any aspect of your course, so they can help you right away.

### **Application:**

You may only apply to Oxford **or** Cambridge, you cannot apply to both universities. Applications to Oxford and Cambridge (along with all your other UCAS applications) must reach the institutions by mid-October. Your Oxbridge application counts as one of your applications on your UCAS form. Cambridge will also require you to complete a 'Supplementary Application Questionnaire' online. Cambridge sends all the relevant instructions to complete this online upon receipt of your UCAS application. Oxford at present does not require an additional questionnaire, although that may change.

### **Assessment Tests:**

Recently, admissions or assessment tests have become an increasingly important part of the application process for most subjects at both Oxford and Cambridge. Most admissions tests are administered by the Admissions Testing Service. They take place in early November in school and you must be registered by the deadline in mid-October. Some courses require a test to be taken at interview, in this instance your college will make the necessary arrangements for you to sit the test and you will not need to register beforehand.

### **UMS Scores:**

Cambridge will ask for high UMS (uniform mark scheme) in every AS and A – Level unit taken. They will measure UMS performance on an **average** across three subjects. In the last admissions round the average Cambridge applicant scored 90% on this measure, and the average successful Cambridge applicant scored 95%. Based on this, those applicants averaging 85% or below in their three best (or most relevant for Science/Maths courses) AS subjects are unlikely to be called for interview. Oxford do not request UMS scores.

### **Interview:**

Interviews at both universities are held from early December onwards.

### **Optimise your Chances of Success:**

If students present a very strong academic record they will be actively encouraged to apply to Oxford and Cambridge universities.

A possible successful Oxbridge candidate will have the following:

- A high proportion of GCSE A and A\* grades - A\* predictions in most subjects at A Level.
- Perform well in admissions tests
- A passionate commitment to the chosen subject. Additional wider reading is a must.

Students must strengthen their academic work as much as possible to support their application to Oxbridge. This includes:

- Read books relevant to your area of interest. Universities often have pre-reading lists available that are a great place to start
- Reading relevant professional journals
- Read commentary on current issues. Broadsheet newspapers such as The Guardian, The Times and The Independent are ideal or magazines such as The Week, New Statesman and The Economist.
- Look for relevant research work published on the internet
- Discuss aspects of your A level subjects in detail with your teachers
- Develop special areas of interest in your subject and research them
- Read newspapers and collect articles which may be relevant to the subject you wish to study (e.g. legal cases)
- Attend lectures, masterclasses and summer schools
- Watch podcasts and documentaries
- Get as much relevant work experience as you can, and write it up carefully and analytically

### **Other Tests**

As more and more courses have become competitive the need to differentiate between candidates has become more apparent. This has led to these courses requiring additional tests.

LNAT (Law: some ten of the top UK Law Schools now require this)

BMAT, UKCAT (Medicine: four universities require BMAT and virtually all the others require UKCAT)

SAT (for universities in the USA)

### **Summer school preparation for University applications**

There are a number of different courses available during the summer holidays. As university places are very competitive, there is a greater emphasis on making your application stand out. Attending a summer school will add value to your Personal Statement.

There are a number of different websites to use.

[www.oxbridgeprograms.com](http://www.oxbridgeprograms.com) [www.oxford-royale.co.uk](http://www.oxford-royale.co.uk) [www.london.ac.uk/tasters](http://www.london.ac.uk/tasters)  
[www.etrust.org.uk/headstart](http://www.etrust.org.uk/headstart)  
[www.premed.org.uk](http://www.premed.org.uk)  
[www.prelaw.org.uk](http://www.prelaw.org.uk)



### **Entry to Medicine or Dentistry**

Every year students from school obtain offers from Medicine and Dentistry. Make sure that you are able to take your place among them by following the school's advice. You may apply only to either Medicine or Dentistry. These are particularly competitive courses and applicants have earlier deadlines. The following will be required.

#### **High academic achievement and potential.**

You will be expected to have achieved A\* results at GCSE level. Particular attention will be paid to the results achieved in science subjects, including Maths, and at least a grade B is also usually required in English. You should be able to demonstrate that you have achieved at least a grade A at AS level in both Biology and Chemistry and that you have the potential for top grades in these subjects at A level. Many students applying have achieved considerably higher grades. Repeating modules is not a good idea for some universities.

#### **Evidence of extensive and appropriate work experience.**

You will have to be able to show that you have a good understanding of the relevant area for which you are applying. You can demonstrate that you have the ability to communicate clearly by your response to work experience. A list of placements will not be enough. Mature and perceptive analysis will be expected.

#### **Appropriate personal qualities.**

Both Medicine and Dentistry require the ability to relate effectively and empathetically to patients while at the same time maintaining a thorough and sensible approach to working under pressure and establishing priorities. You will need to provide evidence of these qualities through voluntary work, ideally sustained on a regular basis over a considerable period of time. A wide range of community, charitable or hospital based work environments would be suitable, so working with children; people with learning or physical disabilities or with the elderly would all provide suitable experience.

**A strong interest in science in general and either medicine or dentistry in particular.**

You will be expected to have up-to-date and accurate information in relation to scientific developments, such as some of the possible applications of the human genome project or of generally modified foods. General references to reading scientific periodicals are not sufficient. It is advisable to read a 'quality' newspaper everyday to be informed of current issues in the medical field and elsewhere.

**Knowledge of current issues in relation to the NHS.**

You will be expected to have some knowledge about organisation and funding of the NHS. You should aim to keep a file of relevant material, including website references so that you are able to keep abreast of current issues.

**Ability to score well in Admissions tests.**

Students applying to study Medicine at Oxford, Cambridge or University College London will be required to take the biomedical Admissions test (BMAT). See [www.bmat.org.uk](http://www.bmat.org.uk). Many Medical and Dental schools now require applicants to sit the UKCAT. See [www.ukcat.ac.uk](http://www.ukcat.ac.uk) to learn more about the test and to check which universities require the test for 2023 entry.

**It is very important to look carefully at medical / dental school websites before you apply. Pay close attention to the way in which the course is delivered.**

*Useful websites and reading*

[www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk) click on Society and then Health

[www.bma.org.uk](http://www.bma.org.uk)

[www.bmat.org.uk](http://www.bmat.org.uk) (for information about the Biomedical Admissions test)

[www.ukcat.ac.uk](http://www.ukcat.ac.uk)

[www.chms.ac.uk](http://www.chms.ac.uk) this site, 'The Council for Heads of Medical School' has a link to other useful websites

[www.Admissionsforum.net](http://www.Admissionsforum.net)

becoming a doctor in the NHS (published by NHS Careers, see [www.nhs.uk/careers](http://www.nhs.uk/careers))

Dental Care in the NHS published by NHS Careers, see [www.nhs.uk/careers](http://www.nhs.uk/careers)

[www.bda.org.uk](http://www.bda.org.uk)

[www.dentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.dentalhealth.org.uk)

[www.wioudyswebwatch.com](http://www.wioudyswebwatch.com) Click on Professions and scroll down to Medical and Health

[www.wellcome.ac.uk](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk)

[www.medicalnewstoday.com](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com)



## ART and DESIGN Applications

There is a different application process for those interested in Art and Design courses; through UCAS Route A or for Foundation via the Art School. Art Teachers will advise.

Students will need to apply to do a Foundation year prior to a degree and this application is made directly to the relevant art school.

Route A applications should be with UCAS from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 15<sup>th</sup> January 2023. Route A courses often require the successful completion of a foundation course as an entry requirement so students must check these prerequisites carefully.

All Art and Design students will be expected to supply a portfolio of work for interview. This is usually A1 or A2 in size. Occasionally to be sent digitally.

## Key Date: 2 May – 2<sup>nd</sup> Mentor Meeting Completing UCAS application form

### UCAS APPLICATION PROCESS FOR STUDENTS 2022/2023

- Think carefully about applying to university. Do you really want to study a particular course?
- Studying at University is expensive; do you want to live at home or away?
- How do I apply?

All students will apply through UCAS application online [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) This web-based service allows you to apply to UK higher education through school. - click on APPLY then students. There are a few guidelines that you must follow. You will need to use the school's buzzword; this is – **ashmoleacademy1**

The registration process will create a username for you. You will be asked to provide a password and memorable words or phrases. Do not use a silly password or memorable phrase, for example 'password' it will not be accepted – choose something you can remember easily – you will need it every time you log on.

The instructions on screen for each stage are very clear; however you will not be able to enter your qualifications until you have entered the centre number confirming you are applying from Ashmole Academy – **THE CENTRE NUMBER IS: 12204.** If you completed your GCSE's at another school you must enter their Name and Centre Number on your form. You will need lots of information, for example your examination details and the examination boards. You will also need to know the borough you live in and that the fee code, for your **LEA is 02.**

For your Personal Statement you must use fonts Times New Roman, Arial/Courier – size 12. You can do this in Word for spell check purposes and cut and paste on to screen. You can write up to 45 lines.

Make sure that you have the qualifications to apply for the course. The personal statement is the most important part of the form and needs to be accurate, positive and stress why you want to follow that particular course. Please make sure that you save your work at regular intervals.

The most important decision to make is what to study, then where to study, making sure the choices are realistic. Your UCAS mentor; this could be your form tutor and Ms Ocloo, Sixth Form Manager are there to help.

When you are sure that your form is complete, send to the referee as directed and inform your tutor that this stage has been reached. You are required to pay UCAS for this service and payment of £26.50 can be made on line using Visa, Switch, or Maestro.

Ms Ocloo will attach the school's reference and your form will be sent to UCAS. You are now in the system and can track your application on-line. UCAS will notify you on receipt of your application and you will be provided with your unique UCAS number. You must use this number in any contact with UCAS or universities.

Some universities ask students to attend an interview. Where this happens students will be given mock interview practice. Some institutions ask for work to be forwarded; please let Ms Ocloo know if this is the case.

Once the form reaches UCAS, and 14 days have elapsed you cannot amend it or add anything to it. Be honest and truthful and be sure to read the UCAS instructions on how to complete the form. Take particular care when completing the fee section and examinations.

What happens following completion of the form is variable. Some students get offers very quickly, other students may not hear from universities until late March. You will need to wait until all of the offers are in before making a decision; again see Ms Ocloo before making a final decision.

Please be prepared to accept rejection as some universities are very heavily oversubscribed. Please keep Ms Ocloo informed of the progress of your application and seek advice where necessary.



## DEFERRED ENTRY

If you want to apply now for deferred entry in 2024 you should indicate this in Section 3 by stating 'Yes' in the box headed 'Defer Entry' against all those courses for which you wish to defer entry. Please **remember to check with the institutions and departments concerned that a deferred application will not place you at a disadvantage**. This is essential and it is your personal responsibility.

Section 10 enables you to explain why you want deferred entry. Remember that what you write might well provoke interview questions.

## COMPLETING THE UCAS FORM – BY SECTIONS

**N.B:** The website version when printed out does not look like the paper version. Do not get worried, just check you have done all the sections – they are the same.

The Web based system programme provides instructions as you complete each section.

### SECTION 1

Generally self-explanatory

The correspondence address is the one which will appear in the UCAS record and that is where correspondence about your application will be sent. This should be your **HOME** address not school!

### SECTION 2

Make sure you enter your **date of birth** correctly; many mistakes are made over this; note that the month must be expressed numerically (e.g. 01.06.92 = 1<sup>st</sup> June 1992)

Details concerning Student Support arrangements (payment of fees); residential category; fee code; area of residence must be carried out very carefully. This material is crucial and you must read all this information very carefully. Every year mistakes are made by students putting the wrong code. If you are not sure what to put, ask do not guess.

In the vast majority of cases you will put your Local Education Authority (e.g. Barnet) to pay your fees and the fee code is **02**.

**DO NOT** put private or 99 unknown. Check this part very carefully, speak to Ms Ocloo if you are unsure.

Area of permanent Residency is the borough you live in e.g. Barnet, Brent, Harrow etc. Be careful about Residential Category and Nationality. If not sure **ASK**.

The box 'Student Registration Number' is not applicable.

You must complete the disability/special needs box if you DO NOT have a disability or special need, the code you use is **0**.

Complete the section on Summer School/Tasters if you have attended any.

### **SECTION 3**

List the courses you have chosen in the order they appear in the UCAS Directory, NOT in your order of preference. You cannot indicate any preference except by a letter sent directly to the Admissions Tutor of the department of your personal first choice; it may or may not influence the decision to make an offer.)

You have a maximum of **five choices**, but are not obliged to fill up all five. These are blind choices, i.e. each university does not know which other universities you are applying for unless you apply for more than one course at the same university.

If you are applying for Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine or Veterinary Science you have a maximum of four choices. If you complete more than four such courses, your application will NOT BE PROCESSED. You may complete the other choice with a different course, or leave it blank. You may have to do a BMAT or UKCAT exam depending on which universities you apply to. Consult Ms Ocloo on these matters. The BMAT exam will take place early November 2018 in school.

You can look at examples on [www.bmat.org.uk](http://www.bmat.org.uk). The UKCAT exam is NOT taken in school and you must register yourself for this in the early summer term of 2022.

Everyone applying for Law should make all their applications in that subject. You may have to do a LNAT exam depending on which university you apply to. LNAT takes place in early November 2022 [www.lnat.org.uk](http://www.lnat.org.uk)

You may only apply to Oxford OR Cambridge, NOT BOTH

If you wish to defer entry put yes in the correct column for each course for which you wish to defer.

Point of entry – **DO NOT** put anything here, it does not apply to you.

You are also advised to apply for courses which offer different levels of acceptance grades, and to ensure that you do not make things difficult for yourself by applying only to very popular institutions and courses. Your predicted grades MUST be used as a guide by you for selecting the universities. Be realistic in your choice.

Be prepared to defend a selection of courses that lack an obvious common thread and try to cover yourself in your personal statement (Section10).

#### ***SECTION 4 – Secondary Education***

DO NOT mention primary education. If you have attended more than one secondary school, these must be included.

#### ***SECTION 5***

Criminal convictions: do not lie as it will invalidate your application.

#### ***SECTION 6***

These details are required for planning purposes but are NOT passed on to the Admissions Tutors in Universities and Colleges.

N.B.: This section must be completed in full.

Occupation refers to the Occupation of one of your parent(s) **NOT YOU**.

#### ***SECTION 7 – Qualifications***

This is an extremely important section where you declare all the academic qualifications you have gained at GCSE or equivalent, and those for which you are currently studying.

#### ***SECTION 7***

You must enter all the academic qualifications you have so far achieved (i.e. GCSEs; only enter A levels if you are a post A-level applicant).

You must give the school's examination centre number (12204) and the name of the School. If you came into the Sixth Form from another school you must give the appropriate information. Scroll down on appropriate box on the programme.

All subjects must be entered in the chronological order in which you took them; group together those taken at the same time (no specific subject order is required). The month is given numerically.

If you wish to include examinations for musical instruments only include the highest level achieved and put it in the right hand column. Again the web system will guide you through this procedure.

List all the qualifications not yet completed – i.e. the A levels which you are in the process of studying (unless you are a post A-level applicant).

## **SECTION 8**

Special needs or support. Complete as required.

## **SECTION 9**

- Paid employment. Declare paid employment if it:
- is relevant to the course you are applying for;
- shows an ability to cope with a busy lifestyle;
- you would want to discuss what you gained from the employment at interview or in your personal statement

## **SECTION 10—Personal Statement**

This is crucial and is your opportunity to tell Universities why you are applying and why they should admit you. For universities/courses that do not hold admissions interviews the personal statement is your **only** chance to communicate directly with university tutors. We stress there is no single right way of completing this section but it is easy to give a poor impression of yourself, so take care.

## **Key Date – 9<sup>th</sup> May - 2<sup>nd</sup> Mentor Meeting**

### **Writing your personal statement**

#### **Personal Statement**

The Personal Statement is your invaluable opportunity to influence the admissions tutors and explain your motivation – especially important when applying for competitive and vocational courses. It is likely to be between 350 and 550 words. Early preparation is strongly advised. It must stand out, and be attractive to read. No purpose is served by cramming everything into a relatively short space; the statement should be about 4000 characters (43 lines) – and carefully chosen words at that. Write in complete sentences, and recognise that lists are of limited value.

Avoid any information that is misleading, fictitious or trivial. You are also reminded of the need for good, clear English as some applications are rejected on account of poor spelling and punctuation. The web system does not have a spell check so work on Word and cut and paste onto your UCAS form. Get it checked first though before completion.

The principal aim is to convey your enthusiasm for studying your chosen subject(s); hence most of the Personal Statement will reflect your academic and intellectual interests. Throughout, specific examples are far more convincing than general statements.

Our advice is to work on the basis of three paragraphs.

In the *first* paragraph, outline clearly the reasons for selecting your

courses/subjects(s). Explain exactly what it is that excites you about them, and make explicit reference to examples of topics, lessons, practicals, research, courses, fieldwork, projects, reading outside the syllabus, etc. Where a joint honours degree is involved you should do this for both subjects. If you have not studied your proposed degree subject at school, explain exactly what has attracted you to it, and offer details of research that you have done. You might also want to explain how your chosen subject links with one or more of your other 'A' level subjects, or even with general studies courses. In other words, you must justify your choice of degree course.

The *second* paragraph might start with some details about your academic achievements, such as scholarships, prizes awarded and participation in external competitions. In this paragraph you should also give some indication of your career aspirations (if you have any) and, where possible, establish links between your degree course choice and your career choice. Relevant work experience should also be described here, and especially in the case of applicants for courses in Medicine and Law. It is essential to explain exactly how you benefited and what you learnt from your work experience. If you plan to take a Gap Year, outline the reasoning behind your decision, and try to give some indication of what you are planning; any activity that is likely to develop your wider skills is particularly worthwhile in this context.

The *third* paragraph offers a golden opportunity for you to advertise your individual strengths and qualities, and thus to impress the selectors with your likely contribution to university life. This opportunity must be seized. The aim here is to include examples of activities which demonstrate your leadership skills, your capacity for teamwork, your enterprise or originality, your sensitivity to the needs of others and contribution to the community, and your determination to stick at a task.

Select three or four activities which bring out these qualities; they do not have to be confined to school activities, and might well include sporting, musical, artistic and dramatic talents and achievements. Charitable works, community service, team membership, direction of a play, posts of responsibility, musical activities, unusual hobbies are simply a few of the possibilities. Do not include long lists of school sports team representation, or foreign countries visited.

Remember that the aim is to establish that you are an interesting individual in your own right, with your own values, priorities and agenda, someone who will clearly benefit from both the course and university life. This should be encapsulated in a short concluding sentence.

Many universities now list in their Admissions Criteria Profiles the sort of attributes they are looking for in successful applicants (this is particularly so for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science). If your chosen university/course publishes an admissions Criteria Profile then you must give examples of the attributes they are

looking for in your personal statement. Such attributes may include: leadership and team work skills; problem solving; ability to cope with a busy lifestyle; empathy; integrity; relevant work experience; resourcefulness, etc.

### **What experiences you should have**

Merely listing pursuits may appear boastful and unconvincing; it is vital to explain the importance of your experiences, what you learnt from them and how they have enhanced your knowledge and interest.

#### **Too few experiences?**

If you are lacking experiences as the UCAS deadline looms, you should firstly get reading - ask your teacher for book recommendations and power-read for a few days, noting down interesting points. For lectures and courses, great resources are our local universities. Many offer free evening lectures so search the relevant department of other universities for further details and get yourself booked onto at least one. Do reflect on your time studying your subject, it is likely you would have been on a trip at some point which may have triggered or enhanced your interest.

#### **Too many experiences?**

If you are in the fortunate position of having many experiences pursuing your chosen subject you must be careful not reel off a list, as impressive as it may be. Try to group experiences, so for example a trip and a lecture may have informed you of the historical development of the subject whereas that book you've just finished may have given you a new insight into the development of a cutting edge theory. Emphasis needs to be placed on important experiences so it may be an idea to miss out some of your less interesting experiences.

#### **'You' – Your Extra-Curricular Experiences**

These experiences will help to prove that you are a resourceful, resilient, reliable and committed student (amongst other just as desirable characteristics). Again, you should avoid reeling off a list of every achievement since your first merit in Year 7. Instead, make clear how each experience has developed you; all those duties involved in being a prefect demonstrate commitment, so too does membership in a band, though perhaps with a touch more creativity, captaining a team involves leadership and communication skills.

In terms of organising your extra curricular experiences, perhaps group them into 'skills that will make me a good student' and 'skills that will make me a good person to have about'. Suggestions of such skills are below:


#### **'Skills that will make me a good student'**

- Being a 'self-starter'
- Independent
- Questioning
- Hard working
- Committed



- Enthusiastic
- Resilient

'Skills that will make me a good person to have about'

- Musical
  - Sporting (not common-room poker, even if it is for "matches")
  - Teamwork
  - Organisation
  - Management
  - Leadership
  - Communication
  - Problem Solving
  - Reliability
  - Innovative
- 

# UNIFROG



Unifrog is the complete destinations platform for Ashmole students. It will provide independent advice and guidance to all students, whatever their future career. Student can:

- Research over 1500 careers – key skills, linked subjects and apprenticeships and labour market information given for each one. Search by keyword, school subject, sector or competency.
- Discover subjects to study at university, access expert tips on how to make successful applications eg reading lists, example statements.
- Access to expert tips on every progression pathway, PSHE and wellbeing support.
- Expand knowledge by completing MOOCs - massive open online courses produced by universities around the world in a vast range of topics and subjects.
- Research all apprenticeships, universities, colleges and sixth forms in one place. Rank and filter these results based on data you would usually have to go to loads of websites to find. On Unifrog, it's all in one place.
- Build a portfolio of activities, competencies and achievements (eg. Volunteering). View personal record of Careers Education, Independent advice and Guidance activities.
- Receive support in writing high-quality CV and Personal Statement.

<https://www.unifrog.org>

<https://www.loom.com/share/bf30f7508ecc4bbaae87baa10aa04154>

Begin by completing the profiles to give you additional guidance on potential areas of interest and future study.

Research careers, potential courses and universities. Remember to save your searches so that you can return to them at any time.

Once you have identified potential courses and universities, consider completing a MOOC. These are fantastic enrichment activities and provide useful additional information for your personal statement and interview.

## Open Days

To see if you are suited to a university it is advisable to visit that university during an official Open day when it is safe to do so, or make a virtual visit to that university where you can explore all facilities available to you. To see further information on Open Days visit [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com) or see the website of the relevant university.

Things to consider during open days or virtual visits:

When you visit an open day, there is often an opportunity to visit the halls of residence.

Is a place in halls guaranteed?

Would a place still be guaranteed if you made this university an insurance offer?

How much does it cost?

Do I still have to pay during holiday time?

What are the facilities like for catering?

Is there suitable accommodation nearby if you live off campus?

What are the travel costs of travelling between campus and accommodation?

How secure is the halls of residence?

What access to Wi-Fi do I have?

Questions to ask students who are currently studying at the university:

Did you manage to find part-time work?

How have you found the course so far?

How have you been supported on the course?

What is a typical day for you?

What are the halls of residence like?

What's the town like? Is it safe? What social events take place?



## Location

The location of where you will study for the next few years may influence your decision on which university to attend. It is important that you look at the geographical location of the universities you are interested in.

The following questions may assist you further in making your decisions:

- Are these universities city based or several miles outside? How often will you be travelling back home? Is there a cost implication?
- How close are the amenities to where you might live at university?
- Cost of living – As you are aware the cost of living in London and the Southeast is more expensive than the rest of the UK. Find out how much student accommodation is at university.

## Taking a Gap year

Many students decide to take a gap year before they begin university. This can be a productive way to spend a year and is viewed as a positive experience by many universities and employers. However, you must use your year constructively in order to show it was worthwhile.

If you are thinking of taking a year out, here are some things to consider.

### What you could do

There is a whole range of things you could do during your gap year, like:

- Travel
- Teach abroad
- Volunteer to work on a project at home or abroad
- Work in a paid position to save some money for university
- Gain some unpaid work experience
- Undertake further study or training

### The pros and cons

#### Pros

- You may feel more energised and refreshed after a gap year, which could lead to you feeling more motivated towards your studies.
- You may have the chance to work or study in an area related to your course, which will help prepare you for your further studies.
- You may have the opportunity to travel, see new places and have new experiences.
- If you decide on paid work, you can earn some money to help finance your degree.
- You could gain a sense of real personal achievement through your gap year activities.
- A year of more independent living can mean that you are more mature when you begin university.
- If you decide to work or volunteer, you can gain new skills and develop existing ones.

#### Cons

- You may find it hard to settle back into your studies.
- You may not be able to discipline yourself for independent study when you return.
- It could be expensive, for example if you decide to travel or do unpaid work experience.
- Your friends may go off to university, while you will be a year behind them.
- If you don't spend it productively, this could give employers a bad impression.

### Prepare yourself

- If you want to take a gap year, you'll need to decide what you want to do and then plan it carefully.
- When deciding what to do, make sure you understand your reasons for a gap year, as this will point you in the right direction.
- A useful starting point is the UCAS gap year guide at [www.ucas.com/gap](http://www.ucas.com/gap)
- Research the options so you make the right decisions – there are a lot of organisations which can give you gap year ideas and more information about what's involved.
- Gap year organisations can be helpful, but you don't have to use one.
- Make sure you shop around to find the best deal and the gap year that's right for you.
- Set yourself goals, so you know what you want to accomplish in your year out.
- Plan your finances, so you don't get into debt. Think about how much you need to earn and/or how much you will spend.

### Useful sites include:

[www.gapyear.com](http://www.gapyear.com)

[www.globaladventures.co.uk](http://www.globaladventures.co.uk)

[www.raleigh.org.uk](http://www.raleigh.org.uk)

[www.gapwork.com](http://www.gapwork.com)

[www.theleap.co.uk](http://www.theleap.co.uk)



## UCAS - What happens next?

Following the receipt of your form, UCAS will send a welcome letter, stating the application number and password. Applicants can use UCAS track to find out about decisions made

Some institutions make decisions quickly; others may keep you waiting until late March. Please don't panic if you don't receive offers immediately.

### Firm acceptance

**This is your first choice.**

If it's an unconditional offer the place is yours! So that course provider will expect you as their student. Or if it's conditional the place is yours if you meet the entry requirements. So just in case you don't, you can pick a second offer as a backup – your **insurance acceptance**:

### Insurance acceptance

**The backup choice to a conditional firm acceptance.**

If you're choosing an insurance go for something with lower entry requirements, make sure it's somewhere you'd still be happy to go to. That way if your results are lower than expected you might still meet the conditions at your insurance choice, then you'd have your place confirmed there. Remember, you'll only attend your insurance choice course if you don't meet the conditions of your firm choice but you do meet the conditions of your insurance. **You can't choose between your firm and insurance** when you get your results, so make sure you're happy with which is your firm and which is your insurance before you reply.

### Decline

Then you need to decline everything else. Or if you decide you don't want to accept any of the offers you can decline them all and either **add more courses in our Extra service** or **see what courses still have vacancies later on in our Clearing service.**

When all offers/rejections have been made, you will receive a grid confirming decisions. This letter will give you a date for the final decision on offers.

You can only hold one firm and one insurance offer.

Please check with Ms Ocloo if you are not sure what decision to make.

You cannot hold an insurance offer that is higher than your firm choice.

The offer you really want may be the lowest offer in terms of points or grades required; therefore this offer becomes your firm and insurance offer.

By the time you have to make the decision on offers you should be fairly realistic about your expected grades.

**REMEMBER** that once you accept an offer it is a commitment, just as the institution cannot withdraw an offer and give the place to another student, you cannot go through clearing if you make the offer at your chosen institution. Therefore it is essential that you make choices wisely; see your tutor or Ms Ocloo if in doubt before making a final decision.

Some institutions may stipulate a specific point in a subject, e.g. 120 in English. If you do not get the specific point score or total, the institution will not accept you, as you have not made the offer.



## **University interviews**

It's important to prepare for your interview. Admissions staff can tell the difference between those who have and haven't prepared.

### **How to prepare**

#### **Know where you're going**

Plan your route – arriving late doesn't make a good impression and you may miss your slot.

#### **What to wear**

If in doubt check whether to wear casual or smart dress.

### **Research the university and course**

Check out prospectuses, course leaflets and websites. Departmental web pages should give an idea of the course structure, topics, modules you can choose and work placements (if relevant). Some websites also have student profiles, so you can find out what current students think of the course.

### **Current affairs**

Keep up to date, especially with developments in your chosen area of study. Read newspapers, relevant magazines, look out for radio, TV programmes and documentaries and use the internet. Good news sites include: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) and [www.channel4.com](http://www.channel4.com).

### **Personal statement**

Refresh your memory on what you have written by re-reading your personal statement.

### **Practice**

Think of suitable answers and questions to ask in advance (it's not the best time to ask about nightlife and social clubs). Don't memorise your answers word for word as it will sound false. Practise with a friend, relative or teacher, this will increase your confidence and reduce your nerves on the day.

### **Interview format**

Make sure you know what to expect. Interviews may be with one or two admissions tutors, they could be a group interview, or involve written or performance tests.

### **Some Typical questions**

These are intended as a guide to help you practise. Your interview will ask you more detailed questions.

1. Why did you apply for this course?
2. Which of your current subjects do you enjoy the most and why?
3. What are your least favourite subjects and why?
4. What are the latest developments in your proposed area of study?
5. What are your best qualities?



6. Why would you make a good teacher/surgeon/psychologist?
7. Have you done any related work experience and if so what did you learn?
8. Where do you see yourself in five years from now?
9. What interests do you have?
10. Do you play any sports?

#### **Tips for the day**

- **Relax**, it's also your opportunity to find out more about the university.
- **How you come across** is as important as what you say.
- **Essential attributes** are interest, enthusiasm and confidence.
- **Don't look bored!**
- **Take a copy** of your personal statement for reference.
- **Listen carefully** to questions and answer what's asked.
- **If you don't understand** or don't know the answer, say so.
- **If you feel you've answered badly**, forget about it and carry on.
- **Ask your own questions**, find out more about the university and course (as long as it hasn't been covered).
- **Enjoy your day**, explore the university, city/town and area.
- **Clearing**

**If you don't get the grades you need to obtain for your conditional firm/insurance place at university, please check with the universities or online with your personal UCAS TRACK (password same as that used to apply). They may still be considering your application dependent on places still available.**

## Clearing

Clearing starts the same day as A-level results are released to the schools/students.

If they have rejected you, you are now able to enter into clearing. Every year thousands of students use the clearing system to find another course which will accept their grades. ACT QUICKLY, Ms Ocloo will be available on the day of results and the day after results to support you.

### How Clearing works

The idea is you identify courses (with vacancies) that interest you and contact the course providers directly to see if they will offer you a place. You'll know you're in Clearing if your Track status says 'You are in Clearing' or 'Clearing has started'.

If your Track doesn't say either of these yet, it might just be waiting for your results to update – get in touch with the universities/colleges if it's taking a while, they might still be considering you, even if your results are a bit lower than required.

### Where to look for courses:

- **The Internet:** the UCAS website ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)) has the latest clearing vacancies. Many universities also have clearing websites and you can often sign up for email alerts so you can be sent courses being offered through clearing as they become available.
- **Telephone:** the One Life student helpline offers free, independent and confidential advice. Call during clearing on 0808 100 8000.
- **Television:** BBC Ceefax (page 700 onwards) lists vacancies and is updated daily. You will still need to call the university, check the UCAS website or call the One Life student helpline.
- **Newspapers:** The Independent, The Mirror and The Independent on Sunday lists all vacancies.

The next step is to contact the university of your choice to see if:

- they still have places available
- your grades meet their requirements

Please ensure that you are available for interviews if required. Clearing procedures change slightly every year, and vary between universities, so please visit [www.ucas.co.uk/clearing](http://www.ucas.co.uk/clearing) for up to date information.

## **REMEMBER:**

### ***Ask for advice***

Talk to Ms Ocloo – she can talk you through alternative courses/subjects.

### ***See what courses are available***

**UCAS has the official vacancy list online**, and The Telegraph newspaper shows them too.

**Consider different subjects** – you don't have to stick with your original ideas.

**The online list is updated continually** – you might not find the exact university/colleges/courses you're looking for – some might be full, but some might get vacancies later on, so keep checking back.

### ***Talk to any universities or colleges you're interested in***

**Give them your Clearing number** (located on the welcome and choices pages in Track), and your Personal ID number which will let them see your application online.

**Ask if they'd accept you** – they might reconsider you (maybe even for the same course) even if you applied to them earlier in the year.

**Get informal offers over the phone** – maybe from a variety of universities and colleges – then decide which you want to accept.

**Take a look around** – if you have time it's the best way to see what a university/college is like – most will be happy to meet you and show you around.

## **Add a Clearing course in Track**

**Click Add clearing choice** and fill in the course details by the date the university/college gave you on the phone.

**This counts as you definitely accepting the offer**, so if they confirm it'll show as an acceptance on the choices page of Track and we'll send you a confirmation letter.

Please only add a Clearing choice once you've had confirmation from the university that they're happy to consider you.

**You can only add one choice at a time**, but if the university/college doesn't confirm your place you'll be able to add another.

## Websites to explore

This is a selection of websites to help you get more information about higher education, choosing universities, student life and student finance, as well as the application process.

### General Advice on Higher Education

- [www.brookes.ac.uk/studying/advisers/advice](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/studying/advisers/advice)
- [www.aimhigher.ac.uk/home/](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/home/)  
Designed to help you make important decisions about your future. Highlights the benefits of going to university.
- [www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)  
The Connexions service offers a range of guidance and support for students aged 13-19.
- [www.nusonline.co.uk](http://www.nusonline.co.uk)  
The official website for the NUS.
- [www.fasttomato.co.uk](http://www.fasttomato.co.uk)  
Interactive careers and education guidance for teenagers.

### Courses and applying to university

- [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)  
UCAS Directory of all higher education courses available at UK universities and colleges, how to apply and other frequently asked questions on undergraduate study.
- <http://education.guardian.co.uk> and [www.timesonline.co.uk/education](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/education)  
To search for league tables to compare UK universities and subjects, as well as articles on current affairs.

### Open Days

- [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com)  
For information and dates of university and college open days.

### Graduate careers

- [www.thebigchoice.com](http://www.thebigchoice.com)  
The student and graduate job site. Provides information on career choices for students at all levels.

### Advice for students with disabilities

- [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)  
Skill is the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities and provides information and advice for disabled students.

### Student Finance

- [www.studentfinanceengland.co.uk](http://www.studentfinanceengland.co.uk)  
The most up to date information on student finances. Advice on tuition fees, student loans and financial help.
- [www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk)  
More information and advice on student finance, including a calculator which can help students find out what financial support they are likely to get.
- [www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk](http://www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk)  
For information on bursaries for health care students.

- [www.studentmoney.org](http://www.studentmoney.org)

Guide to everything you need when planning and organizing your student finances.

#### **Current Affairs**

- [www.channel4.com](http://www.channel4.com) and [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

To keep up to date with developments in current affairs.

#### **Gap Years**

- [www.ucas.com/gap](http://www.ucas.com/gap)

Advice to help you plan and prepare for your year out.

- [www.gapyear.com](http://www.gapyear.com)

Gap year ideas and travel deals.

- [www.gapyearjobs.co.uk](http://www.gapyearjobs.co.uk)

Details of current job vacancies suitable for a gap year student.

- [www.bunac.org](http://www.bunac.org)

An organisation offering working holidays, flexible work and travel programmes and volunteering and teaching placements.

This is just an example of what is available, there are many more organisations, so make sure you research all the options thoroughly.



## **Key questions to ask when considering where to go to university**

### **Course related questions:**

What are the hours of study required, both supervised and unsupervised, on my course?

How many hours of lectures are there?

How many hours of contact time are there (e.g. Seminars/Tutorials)?

What is the structure of the course (often not explicit in the prospectus)?

What level of support is available on studio-based courses?

Is there any on-line learning associated with my course? If so, how much and how is it supported?

Who will be giving lectures and leading seminars, will they be lecturers or post graduate teaching assistants?

What will be the size of my course (size of lecture groups, size of seminar groups etc)

How much structured learning support is available to students (study skills etc)?

Will I have a personal Tutor? If so what is their role?

What funding/support is available associated with my course (e.g. sponsorships, scholarships, and links with employers)?

How many students are admitted to my course via clearing and why?

What are the non-completion rates for my course?

What placements are available on my course?

What are the first destinations/career prospects of students on my course?

What is the average level of qualification for students completing my course?

What are the IT resources like (e.g. Software availability)?



### **Institution related questions:**

What are the chances of shadowing a current student for a day, attending a 'taster day' etc. rather than the traditional open day?

What is (typically) the gender ratio on my course and across the institution?

What is (typically) the percentage of international students on my course and across the institution?

Do you want to be part of a closed (campus-based) or local community?

Can I see myself here?

Is this where I want to live for the next 3 years (location, size of town etc.)?

Is the residential accommodation new or old and what are the facilities like?

Is there internet access in all of the rooms in the student accommodation? If so is it included in the price?

Who is local? Who goes home and who lives on campus?

What is the relative cost of living in the locality?

What are the charges for printing and photocopying on campus?

What is the Student Union like?

What student clubs and societies are there?

What are the sports facilities like and how much do they cost?

What are the music facilities like?

### **General points to consider:**

Remember that there are big differences between school/college and university.

Visit the institution/location on a Sunday afternoon (when it is usually quiet) to find out what it is really like.

Impressions of institutions are very individual, what suits one doesn't suit another, see for yourself.

Remember that even when you have eliminated all the negatives, you are still making a subjective choice.

