Making Choices About Higher Education

How to Begin the Process of Applying

Summer Term 2017

Read through this pack FULLY to give you an idea about how the UCAS system works. After going through the pack with your tutor, begin drafting out your personal statement. At this stage you may not be able to definitively state which course you wish to study, but you will be able to start the process and this should get you thinking about what courses you should investigate further. Make visits to university Open Days, you cannot take more than three days out of school, but most universities offer Saturday Open Days as well as weekday visits. Research university courses through UCAS Course Search.

Even if you are not planning to go to university, you will need to go through this process, so that any decision you make is an informed one. Furthermore, most job applications will also require personal statements alongside your cv.

Summer Holidays 2017

Spend your time wisely! Do your Higher Education research. Use www.opendays.com to register for university open days.

Look through university brochures; visit institutions if possible (they will probably be closed but often if you ring in advance, they will let you look around so that you can get the feel of the place); use the Internet; read up on the different courses. If you do not know the web address for the institution in which you are interested, you can go to www.ucas.com which contains links to all of the different institutions.

Many institutions like you to have completed some type of work experience related to your chosen subject and the summer holidays are an ideal time to do this. Consider your AS grades and end of year outcomes in linear subjects. Try to match courses that you are interested in with your predicted grades.

September-December 2017

Finalise your Higher Education choices.

Applications through UCAS can be made from 1st September 2017.

In September you will be told which teacher will be your referee, it will either be your form tutor, Mr Green, Mrs Malone, Mrs Frederick, Mrs Douse or Mrs Runciman. This teacher will help you with your application if you ask them, and will write your reference for your UCAS form. Each of your subject teachers will complete a subject specific reference for you. Teachers save your references in a folder that has been personally created for you in a secure area of the school system, your referee will check all of your subject references and use them to compile your full academic reference for your application. Full references are
ALL checked by Mrs. Malone before she completes your school reference on your personal UCAS application. The reference will refer to:

1. Your academic achievement and potential, including predicted results
2. Your suitability for the course(s) you have chosen
3. Your personal qualities, such as motivation, commitment, independent research
4. Your attendance and punctuality
5. Your interests and activities outside of school
6. Extra-curricular contributions which you have made to the school

Complete your final draft of your personal statement and check it through with your referee.

Oxford and Cambridge closing date: 15th October 2017. School deadline 29th September 2017
Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science closing date: 15th October 2017 (UCKAT and BMAT tests will need to be completed in September, registration for these tests opens in June).

Invitation to interview for Oxbridge are sent out in late November/early December for dates in December. Medical, Dentistry and Veterinary interviews begin in December but may continue until March.

ALL applications should have been completed by the 19th October 2017. This guarantees that your application can be processed by the Sixth Form team and received by UCAS well before their deadline. Early application can sometimes result in early offers being made by universities.

December 2017 - March 2018

Interview invitations and offers are made. Students decide to accept or decline the final offers. If all applications are rejected, students can apply to other institutions and/or courses through UCAS Extra. Student Finance forms are completed online before the end of April 2018.

How Do I Apply?

Each student applying through UCAS must fill in a UCAS form using the UCAS Apply system. This is very quick and easy to use and because it is done on the computer, you don’t have to keep starting again if you make a mistake or change your mind. It is available on any computer which has Internet access. You will find advice in this pack on how to use the system. You will also be given time in the computer rooms during Tutor Time to fill in the form. There is also a range of resources available in the student section of the UCAS website which will enable you to find answers to questions you may have, and will give you detailed information on how to use the Apply system.
Once your form is complete, you pay and send it. Mrs Malone is then notified on her UCAS system that your application is complete and ready for the school reference. She will check your application before completing all of the necessary school information and sending it off to UCAS.

The application fee is £13.00 for one application to one institution and £24.00 for more than one application. You must pay by debit or credit card.

**What Happens After I Have Applied?**

After you have sent off your application, you will receive an acknowledgement letter/ email to confirm that it has been received. You will also receive an application number and a password, which will allow you to track your application on the Internet using the UCAS Track online system, as well as a list of your choices (which you should check for accuracy) and a leaflet explaining the procedure. UCAS then sends your form to the Universities and they decide whether or not to make you an offer. Some will invite you to come for an interview, in which case they will contact you directly. Sometimes when Universities reject your application, they write to explain why and to offer alternative courses. When the Universities have made their decision, you will receive an email from UCAS detailing the specific conditions of each offer. You will then be given either:

1. A conditional offer (subject to achieving certain exam grades); or
2. An unconditional offer; or
3. A refusal.

You will then decide which two offers you want to hold, normally a first and insurance place. You will be given an individual deadline by which to reply, and it is very important that you do not miss this deadline. **Your insurance place should be a lower offer than your first choice place!!**

**What if I don’t get any offers?**

This is extremely unlikely for the majority of courses (though not uncommon for applications to Medicine, VetSci Midwifery and Physiotherapy), but if you are rejected from all your choices you can apply to different institutions and/or courses through a system called UCAS Extra. You will find information on this on the UCAS website. Mrs Malone, Mr Green, Mrs Frederick, Mrs Douse and Mrs Runciman will also be able to advise you.

**What happens after the exam results come out?**

If you meet the conditions of your offer, the University will confirm your place. It may also confirm your place if you do not meet the conditions, but your results are acceptable and places are available. If not, you will be eligible for Clearing, a separate system through which you can apply for courses that still have places available. You can find out about these places online on results day through the UCAS Clearing and Track systems.
**Student Finance**

Almost every student needs a student loan to cover their tuition fees and maintenance costs while at university. Some students are also eligible for non-repayable student grants, depending on household income. All student finance is applied for online at:


You should visit this webpage and begin the process of filling in your forms as soon as you have decided which offers you wish to accept. Finance forms need to be completed by the end of April 2018.

**How To Decide On Your Course**

**Personal Considerations**

- What subject do you most enjoy?
- What courses are open to you with your current qualifications and academic background?
- Does your course have a minimum age requirement?
- Which courses interest you?
- Are there subjects that you currently enjoy studying and would like to continue with?
- Do your predicted grades match the demands of the courses that interest you?
- Do you have relevant work experience?
- Do you have a particular career in mind?

**Type of Course**

There are five main types of course. You will need to decide which one suits what you want.

1. Degree (Bachelor of Arts, Science, Law, Nursing etc)
2. Foundation Degree (usually at a slightly lower entrance level and taking an extra year to complete)
3. Higher National Diploma (A two-year course which can lead to a degree)
4. Specialised course (e.g. pre-entry journalism, accountancy)
5. Professional course (Institute of Marketing/Personnel Development).
You may also need to consider the following:

- Vocational or non-vocational
- Structure (e.g. full-time, part-time, sandwich, modular, combined, single honours, joint honours)
- Length of course
- Teaching methods (e.g. practical, applied or theoretical, lectures, tutorials and seminars) and assessment (e.g. end of year exams, modules, continuous assessment, practical, projects)

Where to Study

Factors to Consider:

1. Location of the institution
2. Accommodation availability
3. Cost of living
4. Size and type of institution
5. Special facilities
6. Mix of students
7. Size of departments
8. Reputation for teaching your subject
9. Academic year structure

The following sections give more specific advice on completing your UCAS application. There are probably many more issues you need to consider, some of which you may wish to discuss with your family, your friends and/or your subject teachers. You can speak to your tutor, referee, Mrs Malone, Mrs Runciman, Mr Green, Mrs Frederick or Mrs Douse and they will do everything they can to help you, and you can also ask to have a careers interview to be arranged for you.


**Writing Your Personal Statement**

The Personal Statement is often the single greatest cause of concern among applicants. This is partly because it is one of the main determining factors in whether an admissions tutor will offer you a place at their institution. It must be well written as it is an opportunity to demonstrate the research, motivation, preparation, analysis, thought and skills that lie behind the application. It is not a piece of work to be completed at speed. It is something to be developed over time, to be built up, changed and strengthened during the months of decision-making. It must also be completely personal to you. Never be tempted to copy even small sections from “model” statements. UCAS can, and do reject any application with a plagiarised personal statement.

Your statement needs to do three things:

1. Explain why you want to follow the course for which you are applying.
2. Show that you have the necessary qualities and experience to follow the course successfully.
3. Show that you are a person who will contribute to the subject department and to university life successfully.

You should attempt to write three paragraphs, one for each of the above.

**First Paragraph**

Consider the following:

- Have I always been interested in this subject or is it a recent discovery?
- What is it about this subject that I really enjoy?
- Is it related to a career or future plans that I have in mind?

You will probably need to do some careful thinking yourself to analyse the reasons for your choice. You must write a paragraph that will leave the admissions tutor in no doubt whatsoever that you are really committed to following this course and that you are enthusiastic about it.

**Second Paragraph**

This should explain why you are suited to this course and should, if possible, reflect the research that you have done into the different courses and should show that you know what is involved and why you think that you have the qualities and experience to successfully follow the course. For example, you may decide to apply for a Primary Teaching course, in which case you would have to show that you have had experience with children. Demonstrate your capacity to write analytically in your personal statement; for example about some wider reading or research you have undertaken. It could be interesting to write about your Extended Project if it is relevant to your degree course. You should show how your A Level studies have equipped you with transferable skills that you will need on your chosen course. It may be appropriate to cover work experience in this paragraph, or in a following paragraph. Include details of any job, work experience placement or voluntary work that you might have done which is relevant to your chosen degree, and show how this might make you a fitting person for their course.
This section should be about you but it should be shorter than the previous sections. What sort of things do you do inside and outside of school? What are the things that you do that would give a stranger some idea of the sort of person you are? Try to include achievements, such as The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, especially if you have taken this to Gold, or being in the Debating Society, and subjects or courses that you have done which do not necessarily have an examination. If you are planning to take a year out you should explain why. You may include social, sports and leisure interests, but don’t make weak, generalised comments such as "I like to keep fit", make your comment specific and keep it relevant to your application eg. “I have been a member of my local netball team for 5 years, showing that I have a strong sense of commitment and team loyalty, these are qualities I believe are important for a Nurse”. Overall, you are trying to show the Admissions Officer why they should want you as a student and that you are ready for university or college life.

Don’t be pretentious, don’t try to be funny (unless you actually are really witty and your wit is relevant to the course), and don’t try to be someone you are not. The admissions officers want to see YOUR personality, not something false.

You can find examples of good personal statements in BSpace, but beware of copying – all universities have plagiarism software that can detect anything that has been copied from another source, copying will disqualify you from being offered a place. Look at the style and structure, not the content.

Completing UCAS Forms on the Internet – a step by step guide.

How do I access the system?

You can use any computer that has Internet access, either at school or at home.

How do I use the system?

Log on in your usual way, using your own username and password. Go into the Internet and type in the web address: www.ucas.ac.uk. Once you are on the UCAS site click on the ‘apply’ link. Then go into the section ‘student login 2018 entry’.

The first time you go in you should ignore the login boxes and click on register. There will be some information for you to read – click ‘next’ when you have finished. Then you will be asked ‘Who are you with?’ You should click on ‘a school or college’. You will then need to read the Terms & Conditions. When you have done this go to the bottom of the page and click ‘accept’.

Then you will be asked for the ‘buzzword’. We have chosen the word gossip as our buzzword so you need to type that in and then click ‘next’. The computer will confirm that you are registering through the School and you agree by clicking ‘yes’. It will ask you which group you are in. Ignore this and click ‘next’. After that you will fill in various details about yourself such as name and address, telephone number and email address. Please use your full name as written on your examination certificates – no abbreviations or nicknames. If you have a silly email address change it! Admissions officers tell us they can easily be put off by immature email
addresses.

After that it will ask you to choose a password (letters and a number). You will then be sent your username (which will be something like jbloggs1) and this is the username you will use from now on, together with the password that you have chosen. It is worth writing these down somewhere to avoid a great deal of inconvenience later on!

Once you have your username you can begin to fill in your form by working through each section. The sections are Courses, Education, Employment, About You, and Completing Your Personal Statement. You do not need to complete your form all at one sitting. You can save and exit at any time and then resume another day. At any stage you can ‘view all’, to preview or print a copy of your application to date. All uncompleted sections will be highlighted in red. You will only be able to send your form to the administrator once you have completed all sections, including your payment which is by debit or credit card only.

Once you have completed all the sections you should agree to the UCAS declaration and send your completed application to the administrator. It will be checked by Mrs Pottow. If there are any mistakes or problems she will send the application back to you for correction and notify you of this by email. The school reference is then attached and the application receives a final check from Mrs Malone before it is sent to UCAS. You can check the progress of your application by logging on. Later UCAS will send you an application number and later still an acknowledgement letter, stating the application number and password for the Applicant Tracking service on the UCAS website. You can use this tracking system to find out what decisions universities or colleges have made about your application.

What problems might I experience?

- Getting locked out of the system. If you put in the wrong password more than five times you will be locked out and you will have to ask one of the co-ordinators (Mrs Malone or Mr Woollett) to let you back in. This can be time consuming which is why it is a good idea to write down your username and password somewhere safe.
- Forgetting to put down your A2 levels – Qualifications Pending means exams you are going to take this summer. You should put these down without any grades and the system will automatically put them in the right place on the form. Remember to put the right month for exams to be taken – the form will not accept the exams if you put the wrong date in, for A2 summer exams that will be June 2017.
- Not realising that GCE means ‘A’ levels – you will fill in the sections for the GCSEs already taken and GCE A2s (Advanced GCE) to be taken next year, as well as your AS (Advanced Subsidiary GCE) grades for examinations already taken. If you are re-sitting an AS examination you can enter this as pending.
- Not knowing what exams boards your GCSEs or AS/A levels are – you can find this out from your GCSE certificates. It is a good idea to find this out in advance and keep a note of it somewhere. Mrs Pottow or Mrs Owen can help you with this.
- Not knowing the fee code – you should select 02 unless you are applying for medicine or dentistry in which case you select the appropriate NHS code from the drop down menu. You then write down the name of the county you live in, e.g. Kent or East Sussex. It is important you get this right as it affects the financial assistance that you receive from the Local Education Authority.

Good luck! And remember you can always ask for help, advice and guidance from the Sixth Form Team if you are puzzled about anything that is not covered in this guide.