

Sixth Form Students' Higher Education Guide 2017 Entry

Goffs School



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THE PARENT PAGE

Many parents at this stage of their child's life feel confused about the Higher Education options open to them and how best to support them. They are faced with a baffling array of acronyms, ranging from AS Levels, OCR's and UCAS and can be perplexed by concepts like the collegiate system, joint honours, modular courses and clearing.

This guide is an attempt to help both parents and students navigate this minefield and many things, I hope, will be explained and much of the jargon 'busted'!

The value of this publication will vary according to parent and student. I am, for example, aware that many of you have had older children / siblings who have already succeeded in securing a place at university. For you, the guide will act more as a reminder of what needs to be done but it will also contain a significant amount of new information.

Also, we are faced with the situation whereby some parents have themselves been to university whilst others have not. The temptation for the graduates amongst you is to hark back to the glory days of the 1980s (and 1990s for some!) and to give advice that was pertinent to those heady days. Alas, the Higher Education sector has moved on since your (and my) day and you will need to re-acquaint yourselves with much of the territory.

Some advice for parents:

- Be mindful of the pressures that young people are under from this process and the fact that they are combining these decisions with preparing for demanding examinations.
- Try not to push or pull too hard in a particular direction, unless they are with you.
- Take a positive interest but, at times, hover in the background!
- Offer opinions by all means, but they are best offered when they are sought.
- Conduct research for your child but ensure that they take the lead throughout the process.
- Understand that the reputation of some universities has changed since 1983!
- Be realistic about the options pursued by your child; over-ambition is unhelpful.
- Realize that competition for places is fierce
- Visit universities with your child
- Proof read their personal statements; PLEASE!
- Insist (gently!) that they keep you informed of developments.
- Do seek advice from the school and from higher education institutions. **However, please remember that the application and personal statement are ultimately the responsibility of the students.**
- Lastly, please understand that the staff side of the application process takes time and needs to be done carefully. **Familiarise yourself with the timeline on the following page and ensure that your child sticks to the necessary deadlines, so that we can make the process run as smoothly as possible.**

TIMELINE 2016-2017

| DATE | ACTION | BY WHOM |
|--------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| June - July 2016 | Students register with UCAS, research and choose courses. First draft of personal statement. Students needing to take admissions tests eg LNAT, BMAT, UKCAT, see LTh. | Students |
| 9 Sept 2016 | Deadline for early applicants (Oxbridge/Medic/Vet/Dentistry) | Students (early applicants) |
| 16 Sept 2016 | Tutors have reviewed early applications and added the full reference and predicted grades. Students have made necessary improvements. | Tutors Students |
| 16 Sept 2016 | UCAS predictions entered on SIMs | Subject Staff |
| 23 Sept 2016 | Oxbridge/Medic/Vet/Dentistry applications reviewed by TGr and WWi. | TGr WWi |
| 30 September 2016 | ALL students submit personal statements to LM's for review. Final amendments completed by early applicants. | Students |
| 14 October 2016 | Personal statements reviewed by LMs if submitted on time. All students have checked predicted grades on screen. LMs have completed and uploaded references for all students wanting to apply in phase 1. | Learning Managers |
| 15 October 2016 | Oxbridge, medicine, dentistry, veterinary science closing date for applications to arrive at UCAS | WWi |
| 21 October 2016 | Phase 1 application deadline. These applications will be processed first. | Students |
| 14 November 2016 | Deadline for phase 2 applications. | Students |
| November / December | Learning Managers to complete final reviews. | Learning Managers |
| 25 November | All correct phase 1 applications to be sent by this date. | WWi |
| 21 December | All correct phase 2 applications to be sent by this date. | WWi |
| 3 January 2017 | Late applicants must pay and send their form. We cannot guarantee that these late applications will be sent to UCAS before the final deadline. | Students |
| 15 Jan 2015 | Closing date for applications to arrive at UCAS | WWi |
| January to June 2017 | Students may continue to put in late applications, but may be disadvantaged. | Students |
| March 2017 | Students without offers apply through UCAS Extra. | LMs / WWi to support |
| May 2017 | Students notify UCAS of firm and 'insurance' offer. Students must check their individual dates for reply. | Students |
| 30 June 2017 | Applications following this date will be entered into clearing. | Students |
| August 2017 | A2 results - students confirm choices with universities. Apply through clearing if necessary. | Students |

A GLOSSARY OF USEFUL TERMS

Below are words / terms that should prove useful:

Adjustment:

If your examination results have exceeded the conditions of your firm (CF) choice then you can hold your CF offer for 5 days whilst you look for a course requiring higher grades.

Admissions tutor / officer:

These individuals are best contacted if you need help or advice about admission to a particular university. You will only really need to contact them if and when you have been offered a place at the university that they represent.

Apply:

The online system for applying for university.

Campus:

A campus is a site on which a university is located. It tends to describe a university whose buildings are clustered in one place rather than scattered throughout a city or town.

Clearing:

The process (run by UCAS) begins as soon as the A2 results are released in August. It is there to assist students who have missed required grades, or who hold no offers, to find university courses which still have places available.

Collegiate system:

A university made up of separate colleges which together comprise the university, is called collegiate. In such universities, the college plays a crucial part in the lives of students. The only true collegiate universities in the U.K. are Oxford, Cambridge and Durham.

Combined / joint honours degrees:

These are degrees where usually 2 subjects are taken e.g. History and Politics OR Business Studies and French.

Conditional Offer:

An offer made to a student with certain academic criteria attached.

Deferred entry:

This occurs if you decide to take a gap year and it simply means that you have decided to delay taking your place at university, usually for a year.

Degree grades:

Most U.K. undergraduates will emerge after 3 or 4 years with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or a Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree. These can be classified thus, from best to worse:

- A First
- An Upper Second (2:1)
- A Lower Second (2:2)
- A Third (A pass usually granted without honours).

Extra:

If you have applied for all five of your choices and not received an offer, then you can apply through Extra, one course at a time.

Firm Offer (CF):

This is your first choice university offer that you accept through UCAS.

Foundation Degree

A foundation degree is a degree level qualification which combines academic study with work place learning and is the equivalent of two thirds of a full honours degree. Students can decide to continue with their current studies for a further year to achieve a full honours degree.

Freshers:

A term deriving from the American for a student in his / her first year at university, a Freshman.

Insurance offer (CI):

This is your second choice university offer that you accept through UCAS.

Modular courses:

Historically, most university students were faced with a rather daunting set of 'finals' whereby all 3 years' work was assessed in a mad binge of final exams. A modular approach is increasingly common whereby students are assessed on a more regular basis in module.

Open Days:

These are organized by universities as a means by which prospective students can gain an insight into a particular university. They usually take place in June, July, September and October and information on specific Open Days can be found at www.opendays.com

'Redbrick' Universities:

The term is used broadly to refer to British universities founded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in major cities e.g. Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Reading.

Russell Group of Universities:

This group is considered a kind of 'Ivy League' of some of the most prestigious universities in the U.K. There are 24 universities in the Russell Group. However, please note there are many other very good universities which are not in the Russell Group. E.g. Universities of Bath, Lancaster and Surrey

Sandwich courses:

These courses integrate academic studies with industrial, commercial or professional training. For example, it will involve 2 years of study, followed by a year in work and then a further year on the course.

Track:

This is the online system through which you monitor the status of your application. You will receive your offers through this system, reply to offers and make any amendments to your contact details.

UCAS

The universities and Colleges Admissions Service is the central body (based in Cheltenham) through which all students must apply to gain access to a U.K. university.

The New UCAS Tariff:

A numerical offer system sometimes used instead of grades. This has recently been updated and the table below shows examples of points allocated to some popular qualifications.

| Extended Project Qualification | AS level | A level | New Tariff points | BTEC level 3 (two years) TBC |
|--------------------------------|----------|---------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| | | A* | 56 | D* |
| | | A | 48 | D |
| | | B | 40 | |
| | | C | 32 | M |
| A* | | | 28 | |
| A | | D | 24 | |
| B | A | | 20 | |
| C | B | E | 16 | P |
| D | C | | 12 | |
| | D | | 10 | |
| E | | | 8 | |
| | E | | 6 | |

Unconditional Offer:

One of three types:

- An offer given to an applicant who has already satisfied the entry requirements, usually a student applying post results.
- A student who hasn't taken their final A2 exams but is clearly very academic may get an unconditional offer. This is rare.
- An enticement from the university! Some universities are offering a student an unconditional offer if they make them their CF (first choice) university. Birmingham and Nottingham have both used this approach

CHOOSING YOUR COURSE

There is often, at this stage, the temptation to think of universities before considering courses. This is understandable as Sixth Form students hear about how wonderful university X is or how good the social life is at university Y. ***Avoid that temptation and think course first.***

Remember, you are going to spend the next 3, 4 or even 6 years studying this subject or subjects so choose wisely. There are nearly 45,000 courses on offer so it may not be easy.

Clearly there are some in Y12 who have already made firm decisions, mainly about vocational courses like medicine, physiotherapy, speech therapy etc. For the rest of you, it is worth considering the advice outlined below. This is particularly important if you are considering a course that you have never studied before e.g. Psychology, Law, and Sociology etc.

Follow your instincts and interests:

If you have a clear interest in a subject and you know that you would enjoy the subject matter at university then it is seriously worth considering for that reason alone. The best advice is often to simply follow your intellectual curiosity.

Discuss options with your teachers:

Don't wait for a teacher to approach you; take the initiative. Make a point of discussing options with relevant staff.

Consult relevant publications and websites:

www.ucas.com

University Prospectuses

The Times Good University Guide

www.education.guardian.co.uk/universityguide

University web-sites

www.unistats.com

Consider possible Career Paths:

It is asking a lot to expect most 17 year olds to know the career they wish to follow. However, if you have a broad idea, then that may help to narrow your course options. Complete the Spartan test on <http://sacu-student.com/>

UCAS now offer detailed information on Apprenticeships. This can be found at

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/what-study/apprenticeships-traineeships-and-school-leaver>.

RANDOM REMINDERS:

- If at this stage (like many others) you have no clear idea about a career path, then opt for a degree and course that you are likely to **enjoy**.
- Be aware that many employers simply want to employ **graduates**, irrespective of the particular subject of their degree. For example, most accountants did NOT study accounting and finance at university.
- Remember to check carefully the course requirements. Do not make the mistake for example of applying to do a degree in Physiotherapy when you did not opt for Biology at AS Level. ALL good Physiotherapy courses now insist on Biology!
- Some degree courses take not 3, but **4 years** to complete. This is usually the case for Scottish universities and for Language degrees.
- Some degree courses have a '**year out**' in the middle of the course (often abroad) extending the degree to 4 years. This is the case with Languages and increasingly for subjects like Politics where some courses offer a year in Washington or Brussels.
- Research carefully the meaning and expectations of **new courses** like Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology.
- Consider **Joint Honours degrees** if you really enjoy 2 particular subjects. Many joint degrees are excellent and can give you more scope long term. Check the weighting for each subject though - for example Sports *with* Business Management suggests that the emphasis is on Sport, whereas History *and* French implies an equal weighting.
- **Be realistic** about your courses and destinations. There is no point in applying to universities whose entry grade requirements you have no real hope of matching. You will not get offers unless you are likely to achieve those grades.
- And finally.....a word on predicted grades.

Predicted grades are an important aspect of the application process. These are submitted by Heads of Department and predictions are made after lengthy consultation with teachers and following detailed examination of performance data. The School will offer realistic, professional predictions based on the performance of a student so far, as we are aware of the importance attached to them in terms of gaining good offers.

CHOOSING YOUR UNIVERSITY

Most of you will apply to **5 universities**. Before doing so, there are a number of factors to be considered. Most are outlined below.

Geographic Area:

Where in the U.K. would you like to be? Does Scotland or Wales appeal? Would you rather stay in and around the South East? Is it important to get as far away from home as possible?!

Campus or City:

Would you prefer the bright lights of a Manchester, Birmingham or Leeds? Would you rather the more self-contained, easily accessible Reading, Exeter or Kent?

Big or Small:

Is big or small more beautiful for you? Does the fact that Manchester has the biggest concentration of students in Western Europe appeal? Would you rather apply to a smaller university in a smaller town where you feel less anonymous?

Old or New:

Are you seduced by the thought of studying in the shadow of ancient buildings, majestic museums and stunning churches? Would you rather be surrounded by more functional structures, modern amenities and state of the art lecture theatres?

Non-academic factors:

Are sports facilities critical? Is it important for the university to have a good reputation in music and drama? Will the quality of the local 'club' scene be decisive? Is it desirable to be near a national park so that you can keep up your interest in outdoor pursuits?

Financial Considerations:

It is worth stressing that some towns / cities are more expensive than others in terms of cost of living. London, Oxford, Bath, Bristol, Cambridge and Edinburgh tend to be on the expensive side whilst Hull, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle or Sheffield would be cheaper than the average.

Accommodation:

If this is an important consideration then make sure you check that the university offers suitable accommodation to all freshers.

Reputation and academic excellence:

There is a wealth of information published that gives detailed information on universities, for example:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/universityguide>

<http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings>

<http://university.which.co.uk/>

In order to further narrow your choice, remember the following:

Friends, family, Goffs alumni:

Speak with as many people as you can about university destinations. Clearly, if you are considering Leeds, it is well worth chatting with someone who has studied there.

Teachers:

Speak with teachers about relevant universities.

Web-sites:

Search all possible universities on the web. Some universities have '*virtual tours*' on their web-sites; these are well worth exploring.

Prospectuses:

Send off for as many relevant prospectuses as you need. These can be ordered on-line through the university web-sites and are **FREE**. Also worth requesting copies of **alternative prospectuses** as these tend to give an ever better insight to university life.

University Visits / Open Days:

Make sure that you visit at least 2 or 3 universities, in particular your final few choices. University open days can really help you choose where to study. They give you the chance to ask questions and see what's available. A list of open days can be found at the website below.

<http://www.opendays.com/>

The UCAS page below will help you plan your visits.

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/events-and-open-days>

University Taster Courses:

Taster courses are provided by some universities and colleges to give you the chance to experience their academic and social life on campus, before applying for a place. They vary in length: some are one-day courses only, whereas others are held over a weekend, or sometimes over a whole week. There are also a number of summer courses available. You'll often have the opportunity to stay overnight on campus, and to meet lecturers and undergraduate students – while finding out what the course really involves. A list of taster days can be found on the website below.

<http://www.universitytasterdays.com/>

RANDOM REMINDERS:

Be realistic with your chosen universities. Not everyone will have the grades to apply to Oxford, Nottingham or Warwick.

If you are not sure how your results are likely to go then it is worth including a **spread of universities** in your final list of 5. By this I mean 2 top, 2 middle and 1 less strong universities. In so doing, you may get offers from the best but equally you will have a couple of insurance choices as back up.

Dentistry, Medical and Veterinary applicants are restricted to a maximum of 4 choices, but can use the remaining 1 space to apply to other courses (which should of course relate to their main choices).

THE UCAS PROCESS

At first glance, the UCAS form and process looks complex and bureaucratic. Actually, the process is fairly straightforward once you have chosen your universities and courses.

The only way you can apply to a UK university is through UCAS, so you need to ensure that you do it properly. It is therefore essential that you read the following carefully and that you ask advice accordingly. Speak with your Learning Managers, Mrs Wilson, older brothers and sisters and your peers — there is much good advice out there.

Filling in the form:

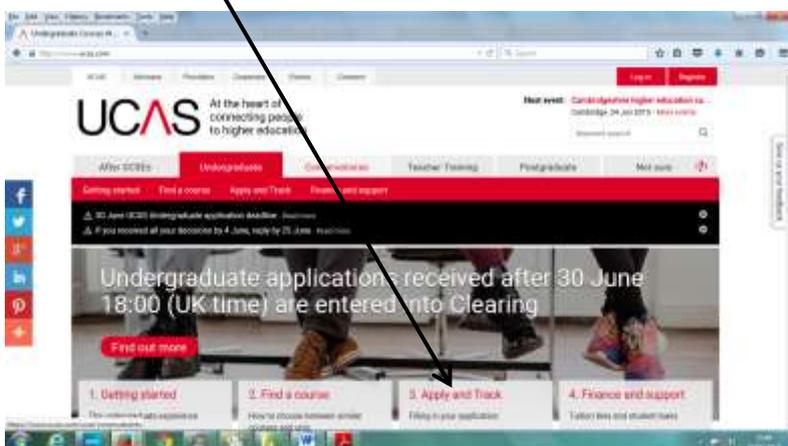
All UCAS applications are made through the **online UCAS 'Apply' System**.

Registering

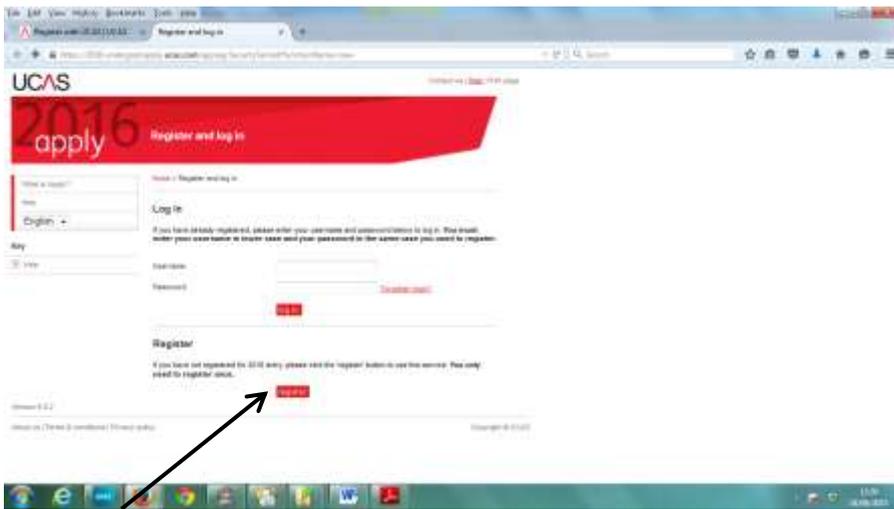
1. Ensure that you register through the school using the buzzword **GOFFS2017**.
2. If you have already registered and have failed to do this, you will not appear on the school system. You must see Mrs Wilson ASAP to have your form moved on to our system. **Do not complete more than one application if something has gone wrong with the first one.**
3. Register with the correct form group.
4. When you register, you will receive a username and password. Print or record them immediately – they will not appear on screen again. Take a note of your security questions and answers

A step by step guide to registering

1. Go to www.ucas.com
2. Apply and Track



3. Register and Apply for 2017



4. Register
5. Next
6. Tick “terms and conditions” at the bottom of the page
7. Next
8. Complete all required details



9. Note: Always use the “see list” (drop down arrow) to choose an appropriate response – NEVER enter in your own version of the answer
10. Note: With your name use Capital Letters for the first letter of your first name and surname, i.e. Helen Smith not helen smith or HELEN SMITH

11. Select an appropriate password and four security questions



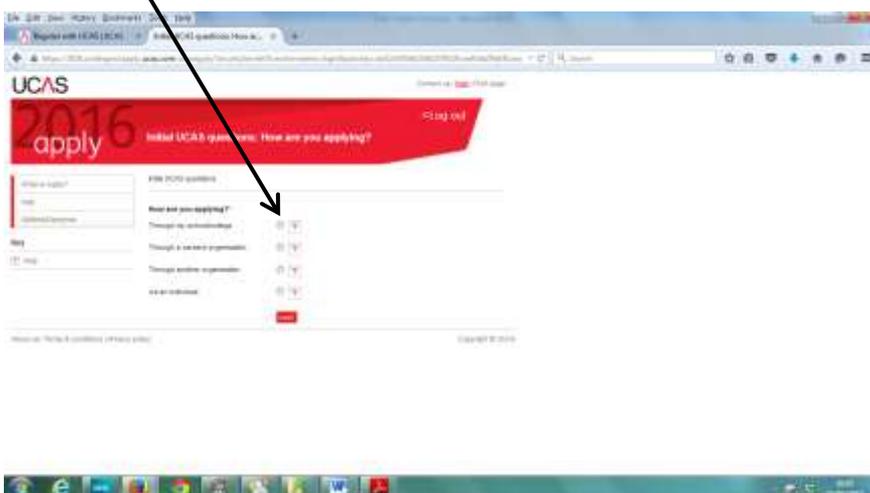
12. STOP!!! Keep a record of your 'password' Keep a record of all your security answers (not questions)

13. STOP!!! Keep a record of the 'username' that the system will give you

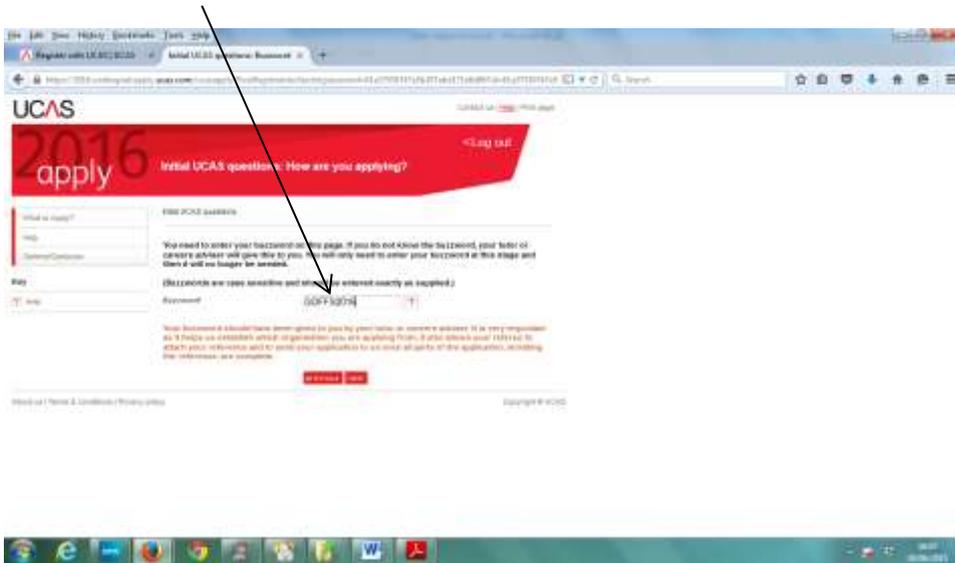


14. Log in now

15. Apply through school



16. Buzzword – GOFFS2017



17. STOP!!! Keep a record of your 'personal ID'. This will not appear again.

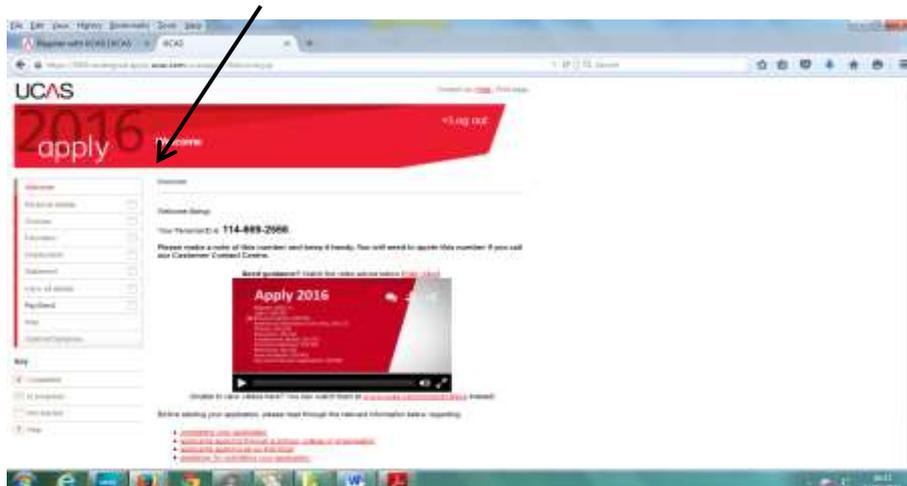


18. You can verify your e-mail later on

19. NOW YOU CAN START TO APPLY

20. Look to the left of the screen

21. Click on **Personal details**



Personal Details

- Your fee code must be 02. Add the name of your LEA under student support arrangements – most of you will be Herts, some may be Enfield.
- Use a sensible sounding email address.
- Fill in all the compulsory fields, marked with an *.

Choices

- Use the '*Search for courses and course providers*' button to research different universities and course requirements
- Check the following information carefully;
 - Do you meet the course criteria?
 - Are the grades realistic and achievable?
 - Is the course content what you would like to study?
 - How is the course assessed?
 - How long is the course?
 - Does it include a 'sandwich year' (working, studying abroad etc.)?
- Make sure that you talk to your subject staff about what grades you can realistically expect to achieve.
- Use all 5 available choices, ensuring you choose a variety of institutions requiring a range of different point scores.

Education

- Fill this in carefully! If you are unsure of information, look it up, or see your Learning Manager or Miss Thorogood to check. Do not guess, as this could lead to you losing your place at University.
- **Keep all your results information in a safe place!**
- You need to fill in GCSEs, BTEC, OCR, AS (Advanced Subsidiary) and A2 (Advanced Level) as appropriate. It is useful to fill in your scores for each module.
- If you complete your UCAS form prior to gaining your AS grades, ensure that you fill them in following Results Day.
- If you are re-taking modules, include this information and put in the appropriate date.
- A2 exams will be taken in June 2017. As you do not yet have the grades, put them down as pending.

Employment

Put in your employment history (if you have one)

Personal Statement

This is a 4,000 character (including spaces) statement. Biggest tip - don't waffle. E.g., "since I was a foetus I have been passionate about Medicine" is clearly rubbish, but not far off what some people have written. I have indeed read descriptions of what candidates did before they were born! Don't write a grand narrative, but explain instead your interest in the subject and what you hope to gain by studying it. Try to avoid the word passion, especially in the first line. Passion: exude it, don't state it.

This should be worked on over the summer holidays or before, and a full first draft shown to your Learning Manager by **30 September** at the latest.

This is an important piece of work. It will take a long time. It is also your one chance to differentiate yourself from hundreds or thousands of other applicants. It is your responsibility to ensure that it is of a high quality and reflects the requirements of your course and university.

How do Admissions Tutors use the Personal Statement?

- To help them select candidates
- To help them decide which candidates to interview
- To give interviewers options for questions
- To test whether the candidate understands the nature of the course
- To ascertain the level of interest that the candidate has in the course
- To help decide between borderline candidates

What should you avoid on your Personal Statement?

- Don't waffle
- Don't refer to your qualities and skills without giving examples
- Don't start every paragraph with 'I'
- Don't make mistakes — proof read carefully and re-draft several times
- Don't refer to work experience without explaining the insights gained from it
- Don't make out that you are superman
- Don't say that your main interests include 'going to the pub' and 'listening to rock music'!
- Your statement should cover the following areas;
 - **Your choice of course** – why have you chosen this?
 - **Academic studies to date / wider reading and research** – your experiences as a learner and the skills you have developed which will help with the chosen course
 - **Future plans** – why you would like the opportunity to study this subject
 - **Experiences / interests / skills and qualities** – contributions to the wider community, part time work, work shadowing, hobbies and interests – all need to be linked to the skills you have developed.
- All areas must be related to your chosen subject. Universities recommend that 75% of a personal statement is focused on how your academic interests and qualities make you an excellent candidate for studying your particular course.
- Explain why you want to study a particular course and subject, and the preparation that you have done to prepare for your future studies. This may include current subjects and topics which you are studying, additional reading and research, relevant work placements, courses or shadowing. Speak to the relevant subject tutors and ask them to advise you on your statement.

- Write about the subjects you are studying now, the skills which you have developed from them and why you find them academically stimulating.
- Ensure that you use accurate subject specific information and language, with varied sentence structure.
- Include information about hobbies and extra-curricular contributions to make your application more personal, but also to show how you are suited to Further Education and to your chosen course. Keep this section concise, but make sure that it presents your qualities well.
- Sell yourself. Without sounding arrogant, you need to come across as intelligent and enthusiastic. Try to use each part of your application to highlight positive qualities. For example, your part time job may have taught you to manage time, work in a team, and complete tasks to a deadline. Don't forget to talk about relevant work experience, and how it may have inspired and motivated you.
- Type the statement into Word so you can check the character count and re-draft this. Your statement can be no longer than 4000 characters. Your Learning Manager will read your drafts, and suggest ideas and improvements.
- Do not plagiarise any information on your statement. Universities have anti-plagiarism software and will reject your application.
- Do not over-exaggerate or lie. You should not include anything which you could not easily discuss at an interview.
- Check your spelling and punctuation. Ask a friend / parent to check it for you. Check it again...and repeat. Please note that it is not your teachers' job to proof read your statement.

Reference and Predicted Grades

Your Learning Manager will add a reference, made up of their observations as your tutor, and the comments supplied by subject staff. They will also add the predicted grades given by staff. You must make sure that you are aware of your predicted grades and that your university choices are in line with them. You must also ask your Learning Manager to show you the predicted grades on screen before they finalise your reference. Remember that the school will ALWAYS be as positive as possible in its references.

Predicted Grade Check

This is an important part of the process and students are equally responsible for ensuring it is done properly.

By now the application is approved and the reference complete. Learning Managers must show students the predicted grades as they appear on UCAS and students must confirm that these are correct.

We cannot be clear enough about this: regardless of what you have been told before, what you see on that screen **at this point** is what UCAS will see when it is sent to them. If there are any errors you **must** alert your Learning Manager to them, and they **must** be reported to Mrs Wilson. Errors cannot be corrected once the form has been sent to UCAS.

An Overview of the UCAS Process

Once you have completed your form, your Learning Manager will review and approve it. When you are happy for the application to be sent, you must pay for it by credit card. **DO NOT PAY, IF YOU ARE NOT READY TO SEND THE APPLICATION.** When you hit “send”, your application is sent to Mrs Wilson, not UCAS. Mrs Wilson has to complete the final sending process and will prioritise forms which are completed by 21 October. Ensure that you check your school email regularly in case the form has been returned to you with any further suggestions or queries.

Key Deadlines:

For Oxbridge, Medics, Dentists, Vets;

- Submit your application to your Learning Manager by **Friday 9 September**
- The revised application (with tutor reference) must be sent to Mrs Green and Mrs Wilson by **Friday 23 September for checking to guarantee that it will be sent off by October 15**
- Applications which arrive after **October 15** will not be considered by the Universities

All other candidates;

- Submit your completed personal statement to your tutor by **30 September**. This must be as good as you can make it at this stage, so that you can really benefit from the feedback given to you.
- Students wanting to have their applications sent on or before 25 November must pay and send by **21 October**.
- Students wanting to have their applications sent on or before 21 December must pay and send by **14 November**.
- Final UCAS deadline is **15 January**

Please note - **applications received after the Christmas holidays may not reach UCAS by the deadline of 15th January due to the time required for checking**

All applications must be checked by students and tutors, and paid for online before they are looked at by Mrs Wilson. Paying for and sending your application will not send it to UCAS; it will simply enable Mrs Wilson to send it off. Mrs Wilson will make every effort to review applications in the order that they are completed. **Applications can only be sent off if they are completed correctly and are of a sufficiently high standard. It takes a lot of time to check and process each application. Please be patient.**

Deadlines have been organised to accommodate the closure for the move to the new site. It is vital that you stick to these in order to enable the process to run smoothly.

And Finally.....

The process cannot be completed without communication. Please take time liaise with your Learning Manager and with Mrs Wilson once your application is ready to send.

The application process involves a lot of work for both you and the staff. Careless mistakes often mean that an application cannot be sent. This causes frustration to both staff and students. Whilst staff are happy to support, it is the ultimate responsibility of students to ensure that information is correct, personal statements are effective and spelling and grammar are accurate.

If you receive a message to contact the school about your UCAS application, you must do so as soon as possible. Staff cannot edit or correct your application. It has to be sent back to you. If you do not send it back to us, we cannot send it off.

The school strongly recommends all students to apply to university in order to keep options open. This is £24.00 well spent. Please do not *plan* to go through Clearing, rather than putting in an application.

INTERVIEWS

Many years ago, all prospective university students were interviewed as part of the application process. Today, an interview is usual, but some courses are starting to interview again.

ALL Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary candidates WILL be interviewed along with some lawyers, some physiotherapists and most teachers. Drama and performing arts candidates will also ALL be required to interview / audition.

The following section therefore is of main concern to these groups.

Before the interview:

- Organize your transport so that you get there in good time; nothing worse than rushing or arriving late!
- Dress appropriately.
- Read the university prospectus and information about the department and course very carefully.
- Re-read your personal statement and UCAS form; many interview questions are based on this.
- Prepare answers for obvious questions e.g. why have you chosen this course? What has attracted you to this university?
- Be prepared to discuss specific interests you have, books you've read or places you've visited connected to your chosen course.
- If you are applying for a course that you have not studied before e.g. Psychology make sure that you have a decent grasp of the subject before the interview.

During the interview:

- On the day, try to look calm, cheerful and reasonably relaxed. A firm handshake, eye contact and a smile always go down well!
- Don't try and bluff in the interview; they will see through you in seconds. If you don't know an answer, say so.
- Be engaging and enthusiastic; they like candidates who show a genuine interest in their subject.
- The interview is unlikely to come in the form of a 'grilling'. Rather, interviewers aim to put the candidate at ease and want to discuss their thoughts and ideas.
- You will often be asked at the end of the interview whether or not you have any questions; have one or two ready to ask BUT do not ask questions on topics covered in the material already sent to you by the university.

How will the school help?

In the autumn term of your Y13 the school will offer interview advice / techniques / practice etc.

OFFERS

All applications submitted by **15th January 2016** will be considered equally by universities.

UCAS will acknowledge your application and will ask you to check that it has interpreted your application correctly. Your acknowledgement will include your **application number** as well as your **password** to enable you to log in to the UCAS computer to follow the progress of your application (UCAS Tracking).

Keep a careful note of your application number and quote it if and when you need to contact UCAS.

After your application has been sent off

Keep checking your emails, get your emails on your phone, there is no excuse for not doing this. Download the UCAS app. Reply to emails from unis: you can lose an existing offer by not replying. Remember to update UCAS if any of your details change e.g. email address or mobile telephone number.

You will get one of the following responses:

- Conditional Offer - read the terms carefully, and ask if it's not clear.
- Unconditional Offer - let Mrs Wilson know immediately if this happens. It should be good news, but it might mean you've made a mistake. Check with us before you accept.
- Interview - reply!
- Declined - you should be given a response that explains why, but please bring these to Mrs Wilson if you want further information.

Students and staff will be able to see offers on the Track screen. Of the five choices, you can select two offers. One is your firm choice and the other (which should really be a lower offer) an insurance. This needs to be done by the start of May 2017. Also make sure that you actually want to go to your insurance choice. If you do not really want to go there you could end up in clearing. Save the hassle and really think about this. Please talk to Mrs Wilson if you are unsure about which offers to hold.

If you want to defer your entry (enter university in 2018), this is best done when making your choices; however you might be able to defer up until just before enrolment. At some universities, deferring is as easy as sending an email. If you wish to do this, you can do, so long as the university agrees. Phone them up and ask.

What happens if I don't get any offers?

This doesn't happen very often, but if it does please come and discuss this with Mrs Wilson. The options available to you are to:

- Apply for **'UCAS Extra'**, which means you can re-apply for other courses or universities and your deadline is the end of June. UCAS will publish listings of courses that will still consider applicants.
- **'Go through clearing'**. This system operates as of mid-August once results have been released. There is still a chance that you can get into your chosen course if places are still available.

RESULTS DAY AND BEYOND

If you have met your offer:

If you have met the terms of your firm choice this will be automatically selected for you on results day. You don't need to do anything more on the day. Some universities will still offer you a place even if you have missed the conditional offer. The chance of this happening, however, varies greatly from course to course.

Before the end of August UCAS will send you an official notification of the result of your application. If your place is confirmed, you will be asked to reply to the institution within 7 days.

You need to deal with your university registration, accommodation and induction procedures. You need to sort out your finances and loans.

If your firm choice university declines you and you've met the terms of your insurance offer, then that will be automatically selected for you.

If you accept an unconditional offer at any point, that's it.

The complications start when a university decides to **hold you** rather than accept or decline. This typically happens when a student has narrowly missed the grade requirements of an offer. This is where you need to be ready to start making phone calls - come into school if you would like staff to support you with this process.

Nothing is final and legally binding until the place is confirmed in writing in August/September 2017, and you sign *and return the contract*.

If your grades are better than expected:

If your results have exceeded the conditions of your conditional offer (CF) you might want to consider using **Adjustment**. This runs from A Level results day 2017 until 31 August 2017 only and will enable you to hold on to your firm offer for five days whilst looking at alternative options.

To use Adjustment:

- Register in Track by clicking on 'Register for Adjustment' on your 'choices' screen.
- Contact a university or college to find another place. The institution will check that you exceed the conditions of your unconditional firm choice.
- The institution will tell you if they can offer you a place, and you tell them if you want to accept it.
- If you are accepted through Adjustment, your Track screen will be updated with the new choice and we will send you a confirmation letter.

If your grades fall short of your offers:

If you fail to qualify for your chosen universities, you will need to "go through" Clearing.

Clearing is a service that operates between mid-July and September. You can take part in Clearing if you have already applied through UCAS and you are in one of the following categories.

- You have not received any offers.
- You have declined all your offers or not responded by the due date.

- Your offers have not been confirmed because you have not met the conditions (i.e. you have not achieved the required grades).

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.

You will need to find out about vacancies through the clearing system. ***Vacancies will be published in The Telegraph newspaper and on the UCAS web-site.***

Make sure that you're available to speak to universities and colleges

Treat your Clearing application like a job application - deal with it yourself! During Clearing, you need to be available in person to deal with admissions tutors and to make decisions. It is important to plan your summer holidays so that you are at home when your exam results come out.

More information about Clearing will be available on Results Day should you need it. Please speak to a member of the Sixth Form team

STUDENT FINANCE

For good or bad the system for funding has dramatically changed over the last decade. Every student now has to pay tuition fees and these have been significantly increased since the cohort starting university in September 2012.

If you are planning to go to university in September 2017 the system is as follows: -

Following the Government's recent reforms regarding higher education and university fees, universities are currently able to charge up to £9,000 per year for tuition fees. Tuition Fee Loans lend you up to the £9,000 (or up to £6,000 for a private course provider). This is paid directly to the course provider, and you won't have to pay it back until after your course, when you're earning above a certain level.

Your living cost (i.e. of accommodation, food, entertainment, travel etc.) will average about £6750 in addition to tuition costs (this figure will have to be increased by @ 25-30% if you are considering studying in London). A Student Loan is available to all Higher Education students, though Student Finance England. More details can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/browse/education/student-finance>.

You can choose to share your details with Student Finance England when you complete your UCAS form. They will then contact you with information about applying for a student loan. You will be able to apply from around February 2017.

More information on Student Finance will be made available over the course of Year 13.