

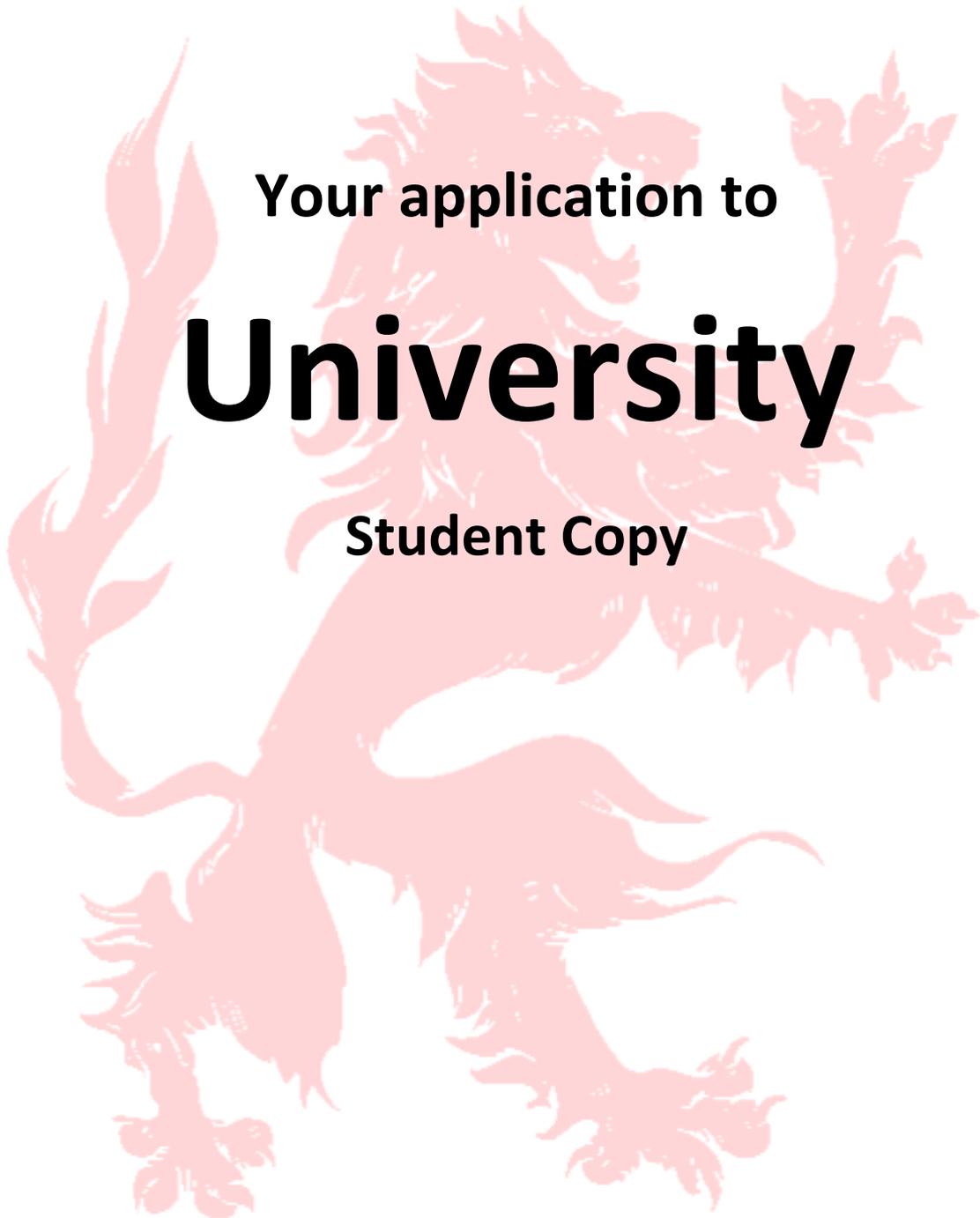
Cheslyn Hay Academy



Your application to

University

Student Copy



INTRODUCTION

This booklet is designed to help you make a successful university application. Although you will wish to consult other literature and websites, the information we provide should get you moving in the right direction!

The booklet is divided into three sections.

Section 1

- A brief overview of Higher Education. Is university right for you?
- Admissions Tests.
- Grades required
- Researching universities and selecting the right 5 choices.

Section 2

- Who is responsible for what?
- Getting a reference from a subject teacher.
- Extra Routines for Oxbridge candidates only.

Section 3

- Filling in your UCAS Application Form.
- Writing your Personal Statement.
- Examples of Personal Statements.
- Key Dates and Deadlines.

Although applying to University/College can appear a little daunting, in reality it's all relatively straightforward and we're here to help support and guide you – so don't panic!



SECTION 1

Researching your university and your undergraduate course

What should you be doing?

- Research for Higher Education/Careers. That means you need to know **NOW** what course you are applying for and where, as your Personal Statement needs to reflect your skills and talents for your chosen course of study.
- If applying for university your UCAS application needs to be completed by the October Half Term.
- Your personal statement needs to be submitted to your Form Tutor (who writes your reference) **well before the above date to allow for amendments.**
- **NB – the deadline for Oxbridge/Medicine/Veterinary Science/Dentistry is Monday, 15th October.**

Don't forget:

- Applications to any university can be made before applications to Oxbridge etc. deadline. Remember some universities offer places, for some courses on a first come, first served basis.
- If you are an applicant for **Oxbridge, Medicine, Veterinary Science or Dentistry** and your application is not completed by **18th September**, then we cannot guarantee it will be submitted by **15th October 2020** (the deadline).
- **The final (external) dates are 15th October if you are applying to Oxford or Cambridge, or for Medicine, Veterinary Science or Dentistry, and 15th January for all other subjects, these dates should be viewed as a last minute option.**
- **Any applications made after 3:30pm on 11th December cannot be guaranteed to be 'on time' applications.**

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE UCAS PROCESS IS COMPLETED BEFORE THE SCHOOL BREAKS UP FOR CHRISTMAS.

1. Is university the right place for me?

- You will need the strength of mind and self-discipline to be able to work for long periods on your own.
- You will have to organise your own work and keep to your own deadlines; you will not be supervised as at Sixth Form.
- On the other hand, three or four years at a university can be a rich experience, and a degree can open doors which otherwise may remain closed.

Probably the most likely reason for university students becoming disenchanted with their studies is inadequate preparation beforehand. Think very carefully, therefore, about the courses for which you apply and gather as much information as you can so as to ensure that your chosen area of study, at a given university, is correct. Admissions tutors are looking for undergraduate students who are excited about their prospective degree course and display in-depth understanding of the content and demands of the course. **Priority is given to those who can show evidence of research.**

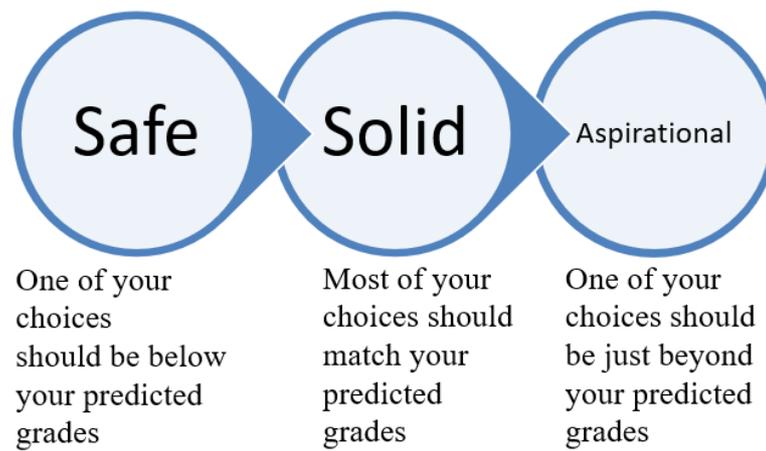
- You must have obtained, or be in a position to obtain, the minimum GCSEs and A Levels required both by the university and by the faculty offering the course in which you are interested. Some of the more competitive courses include an applicant profile on their website; check you fulfil all of their criteria. **Keep checking that the entrance requirements have not changed. This may happen.**
- The 'UCAS search tool' on the UCAS website www.ucas.com will be available from May and will state the entrance requirements. You can also use Unifrog to research this information.
- **Every university you apply to can have different criteria for selection;** UCAS points, particular grades, the EPQ – do not assume anything, check carefully when applying and when you receive an offer.

2. Know your grades

To try to make applications without knowing your likely predicted grades is like trying to buy a house without knowing how much you can afford. It's a complete waste of time.

- **What you must first know, in order to make sensible applications, is to know your UCAS predicted grades** – from January of year 12 to the end of the UCAS application process your teachers will include a "UCAS predicted grade" on your report. Whilst this grade will be a positive grade it will also reflect your teacher's views of your ability. It is your job, if you disagree with your teachers' judgements of you, to ask your teachers what you could be doing to secure a higher UCAS predicted grade.
- As we are still unsure when end of year 12 exams will take place, we will use a method of assessment early in year 13 to determine your UCAS predicted grade.
- If you disagree with this final UCAS predicted grade decision, then it is your job to approach your teacher(s) who will set you some assessed work to allow you to prove that you have the ability to achieve the higher grade. If the grade changes you should ask the subject teacher to inform Mr Allen and Mrs Done via email.
- Then you would be well advised to choose one or two courses, which reflect an optimistic estimate of your grades; one or two a middle estimate, and one a pessimistic estimate. That

will give you the best chance of being accepted by a university that you may wish to actually go to.



3. How do I do my research?

What should I study?

- Discuss with your tutor, subject teachers and parents.
- Use your work experience in Year 12 to identify your skills, and possible future career options.
- What career do I want – is earning lots of money more or less important than an interesting career?
- What degree do I want to study? Research to determine what degree might lead you to your thoughts on a career.
- What subjects am I currently enjoying?
- What subjects have predicted me high grades?
- Do I want to study a subject that I don't currently study at A-Level? E.g. Law?
- Consider subjects that might be related to current A-Levels that you do, e.g. Oceanography is a subject related to geography.
- It's worth googling these subjects in relation to careers to see where the degree can take you in life. If you need more assistance, then you should request a careers interview.
- It's worth considering a joint honours degree where you study two subjects.

Which universities should I choose?

- You may select up to **5 university courses (4 for Medics, Vets and Dentists plus one other non medical course to 5 in total)**, not necessarily at different universities.
- Aim to compile a **shortlist** of about **10 or 12 courses**, which seem to you to be interesting.
- There is no sure and certain way in which to compare universities in terms of their teaching of a particular subject, but you should try to find out all you can.
- If I want to live at home I should ensure that I select universities within commutable distances from where I live.
- Consider whether the university allows a "contextual offer" that means you can get in with lower grades if you meet certain criteria – look at the university websites.
- Do I want to live on a campus university with a self-contained village of students or do I want to live at city university with various parts of the university dotted around the city?

- Most universities will expect me to find accommodation in the town or city after the first year so think about the kind of city or town I want to live in – a smallish city like Chester, or a big city like Liverpool? Or do I want to live in a very rural area such as Aberystwyth or Lampeter (smallest university town in the UK)?
- I need to find out basic information - <https://www.ucas.com> should be the starting place – simply use the search tool like you would with google.com.
- What about the academic reputation? – <https://www.theguardian.com/education/ng-interactive/2017/may/16/university-league-tables-2018> select the course I want to study and look at where it lies in the league tables. Look at other aspects from the league tables, including employment statistics after university and student satisfaction ratings.
- Look on student room which is an informal forum about <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/> This website allows you to read opinions from former and current students.
- If you have extra-curricular interests, e.g. drama, then research which universities will help you continue these interests. Some universities have an excellent reputation for sport.
- Check whether you need to complete any work experience. This is the case with degrees involving medicine.
- Compare course content and structure by ordering university prospectuses and departmental leaflets.
- What's on offer from the course. Does it allow flexibility and study topics of your choice or is it more prescriptive?
- Is there anything else it offers such as a year abroad?
- What UCAS points do they require and can you realistically achieve this with your UCAS predicted grades?
- Attend Open Days – you need to complete a Request for Planned Absence form.
- Sign up for taster courses (available during the summer vacation and particularly useful if you are considering subjects such as law, medicine, veterinary science).
- If you are applying to Oxbridge, attend faculty open days. Obtain college prospectuses and contact the relevant Students' Union to obtain their alternative prospectus.
- Remember the website for each institution has the most up-to-date information regarding courses and the standard offer for each course. Note that the standard offer for each course can change after the publication of the prospectus.
- It is important to remember that graduate employers will look at the quality of your A Levels and your degree. They are also more proactive in recruiting students as their future employees, from the highest-ranking universities, and those universities providing high ranking degree courses, in particular subjects, relevant to their business.
- Before applying for a particular university, look at their KIS statistics at www.unistats.direct.gov.uk to find out information about graduate employment, in graduate level jobs. Also look at the university's website about the careers support offered to students.
- Present staff at school, old students, friends and open days can all be good sources of information – though do remember that open days are really a sales pitch.
- **'Open Days' in the summer and autumn term are crucial.** Make sure you complete a **Request for Planned Absence Form** tutor at least two days prior to your visit. You are obviously free to visit universities at weekends or during holidays.
- When you have a shortlist, contact the institutions concerned asking them to send you a prospectus and especially anything on the course(s) you are interested in. Alternatively access their website – remember this has the most up-to-date information.
- You may also wish to consider several personal factors: accommodation, distance from home, facilities, campus or city and don't forget COST! The difference in cost can be huge

between different universities depending on their location. The universities will have their current tuition fees on their website. Please be aware tuition fees can be subject to change for the following year.

- You could score each of your shortlisted universities out of ten on **your** most important criteria e.g. quality of teaching, ranking of the university, employability stats, location, campus or city, nightlife, cost of living etc.
- If you are considering a **combined degree** encompassing more than one subject, investigate different degree titles, i.e. Mathematics **and** French (each part is 50% of the course), Mathematics with French (more Mathematics than French). If you are considering a broader range of two or more subjects, investigate 'Combined Arts' or 'Natural Sciences' degree courses. Many universities now allow you to pick modules from other faculties during your degree course, without changing the title of your degree. If you have a particular career idea in mind, for after your degree, check that the proportion of each subject in your degree is sufficient.

Please don't expect to find a course which is 100% right for you in every respect. Your final selection will most probably be made not because of its perfection, but because it offers, on balance, the most advantages. Most undergraduate students develop a liking for, and a loyalty to, their place of study once they have settled in there.

4. When will my course begin?

- You can either apply for the next academic year (2020) or alternatively for 'deferred entry.'
- You can apply for deferred entry when you make your application, or leave it till later in Year 13 to finalise your decision when you have clearer plans and finances in place.
- Some courses do not favour deferred entry, and Admissions Tutors can view a 'year out' with some concern. e.g. Maths and Languages courses. **ALWAYS** contact the appropriate University Admissions' Tutor and ask for their views on the matter.
- Some universities and courses favour a year between Sixth Form and university spent on non-academic work, though they expect the time to be spent constructively.

*Even if you are not sure whether you will definitely apply to university the UCAS form, and in particular the Personal Statement are useful, in preparing a CV or letter of application. If you decide to apply to university the following year or in one or two years' time, the Sixth Form will still be able to support you in your application. **Therefore, it is important that you complete a UCAS application but do not send it.** We keep a paper copy of your application and Personal Statement on file. However, after two years it would be more difficult for the Sixth Form to support you.*

Admissions Tests

Once you have decided where and what you want to study, there may be an admissions test for the course. Generally, students wishing to study Medicine, Veterinary Science, Dentistry, Law or wishing to go to Oxbridge need to sit these examinations. ALWAYS check the University website for up-to-date information.

You will not be invited for these; you need to be pro-active in registering. Please see Mrs Prodger the exams administrator.

There are many books produced to support you in preparing for these tests. There are also lots of coaching courses available, at varying costs.

SECTION 2

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT?

Whether you are applying to university, an Art Foundation Course or some other type of course, you will need to fill in an application form and write some form of 'Personal Statement'. The advice given here is mainly tailored to UCAS applications, but the general points apply to all courses.

The role of your Tutor

- Your tutor will be your academic referee and, therefore, will write your confidential UCAS reference compiled from the subject reference(s) obtained from your teachers. **Firstly though you must send a separate reference form to the subject teacher(s) of your choice.** The form will be completed by your chosen subject teacher who will then send it to your tutor for a full right up. Mr Allen will email you the form in summer 2020 (example below).
- Tutors will discuss with you your choice of courses/universities.
- Tutors will check your Personal Statement and provide advice – *this does not mean writing it for you.* **They must be in possession of your Personal Statement when they write your reference.**
- Keep a record of your HE progress and the Open Days you attend.
- Give advice on offers in consultation with the Sixth Form Team.

Subject teacher reference request pro forma for UCAS application	
Name:	Tutor Group:
Subject(s) I intend to study	UCAS choices (maximum of five) with entry requirements – don't worry if still unsure 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
For staff use only (below)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specifics about exam performance including past exams and potential for future exam performance. Early thoughts on UCAS predicted grade (your final UCAS predicted grade will be taken from the September report).	

Mr Allen and Mrs Done

- Mrs Done in the SIMS office keeps an administrative record of your application. She will receive your application when it is complete and do some basic checks. She will send it to Mr Allen for thorough checking. Mrs Done also inputs all of your UCAS predicted grades. Staff should email Mrs Done and Mr Allen if they raise your predicted grade. She will also email you for any amendments that you need to make as well as sending off the final application.
- Mr Allen will make the final check of your whole application including the tutor reference. He will ask Mrs Done to email you if you need to make amendments to the application.

Don't forget your parents/carers

Your parents/carers may decide to contribute financially to the cost of your education. Please be thoughtful and involve them at every stage in the decision-making process. They are often fantastic sources of support when completing the Personal Statement, as they often know you best and might suggest areas of strength you have not included. They are especially useful in visiting university open days with you!

Your role

Take personal responsibility for your own application

1. Research potential courses.
2. Check you have the right entry requirements (if in doubt – contact the relevant Admissions Tutor).
3. Ensure that you appreciate the exacting demands of highly competitive courses and remember that the minimum entry requirements are often insufficient to gain a place.
4. Ensure you have a reasonable spread of ‘offers’ e.g. if you are predicted B, B/C, C you might aim for 2 courses that require B, B, C, one/two that offer B, C, C and another one/two that call for C, C, C. Also appreciate that points’ offers give you more flexibility. Choose 5 (4 for Medical students, Vets and Dentists) university courses in total.
5. Make a decision when you wish to start university – in the term after A Levels, or after a GAP year? Seek plenty of advice on this; always contact the universities to check.
6. Provide a first draft of your personal statement for your Tutor by the end of the Summer Term at the latest! Appreciate that what you write has to be you and is potentially setting the ‘agenda’ for future interviews. Check your English carefully, so that you avoid careless errors and ensure that what you write makes sense.
7. Keep to the Sixth Form deadlines but also those set by your Tutor. Appreciate that you are one of over 60+ applicants.
8. Ensure you double check Course Codes – from the UCAS website.
9. Make sure **you** register for and sit any required admissions’ tests by the deadlines (e.g. LNAT, BMAT).
- 10. Ask a trusted subject teacher for a subject reference. You will need to email the form to the teacher. It’s best to request a reference from the teacher teaching the same subject as the degree you intend to study or as close as possible to it. If a joint honours degree, send a form to two of your teachers. This will be emailed you all next summer.**
11. When you have completed your online application as well as uploading your fully checked personal statement press send to referee. Do not worry! The form only goes to Mrs Done and Mr Allen. **The final process will take up to 7 working days before your form is submitted – please be patient.** Make sure you use an external email account that you check regularly.
12. Instruct parents to pay the UCAS administration fee, which they can do through the parent pay section of the school’s website.
13. If you are asked to see Mr Allen or Mrs Done please make an appointment urgently – failure to do so can result in your application taking longer to process.
14. Check UCAS online regularly to track the progress of your application and discuss offers with your tutor.
15. Respond promptly and act on any correspondence from UCAS – keep checking your emails!

Extra Routines for Oxbridge candidates only

1. Decide between Oxford and Cambridge and attend the Oxbridge meetings. You cannot apply to Oxford and Cambridge in the same year.
2. Have a short list of three or four possible Colleges.
3. Discuss college choices with Mr Allen. Check whether there have been other students at the College in the past for the course chosen. You can also make an OPEN application.
4. Decide on the subject you want to study.
5. There are no longer additional application forms for Oxbridge applicants. For Cambridge you will be asked to complete an online Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ) which contains an additional space for an extra short statement. It is not essential to complete this, but you may wish to add something here that is specific about the course/college that you

are applying to. You will be asked to do this once Cambridge receives your application. Your Cambridge application will only become valid once you submit your SAQ by the deadline set. Please pass your SAQ to Mr Allen for checking. Details about the SAQ can be found on the University of Cambridge website (www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/apply/saq.html) Oxford **do not** ask candidates to complete a SAQ.

6. Some courses/colleges at both Cambridge and Oxford may require you **to register to take a test or send in examples of written work – you need to check this carefully for the subject you wish to study and the specific college you are applying to.** If work is requested always check with the relevant school subject leader as to what to send. You should send something that you have produced as part of your normal school work, which has been marked by a teacher and not re-written/corrected in any way. Oxford university would expect each piece of written work to be no more than 2000 words. A Level material is preferred and you will be expected to critically evaluate it at interview. After you have submitted your application, and usually before the end of October, the college considering your application will get in touch to tell you how to submit the written work. Most colleges will ask you to post your written work (unfolded) handwritten/typed, although some will accept it electronically. Colleges do not return written work so make sure you keep a copy. You will also need to complete a cover sheet for each piece of work you submit.
The closing date for submission of written work, if required by your subject at Oxford University is normally **10th November**, for Cambridge it is **15th November**, but you **MUST** check websites for the latest information.
7. For some courses you will be required to sit specific tests in advance. **It is your responsibility to be aware of which tests you need to sit and when to register for them. All details are available on the university websites.**
8. You may be required to sit a short test at interview. See the College websites for this information.
9. Oxbridge interviews normally take place in the winter. Mr Allen will offer you mock interview practice once you know you have an interview.

SECTION 3

Filling in your UCAS Application Form

Introduction

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

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** to the life of the university or college.

Admissions Criteria Profiles - university websites often give a clear statement of the grades and other requirements universities are looking for from applicants. In some subjects such as Medicine non-academic qualities such as leadership, team-working skills and the ability to cope with a demanding lifestyle are particularly important.

You should get on with planning your applications as soon as possible using the information you can access 'on-line'.

DON'T whatever you do, use out-of-date information, and **DO** use the 'UCAS Search tool' on the UCAS website.

Completing the UCAS Form – general guidance

All applicants now apply to UCAS **electronically** at www.ucas.com. Use the link to 'Apply' and follow the instructions carefully.

This is **your application** and it is ultimately **your responsibility** to ensure it is completed correctly. You will be given a huge amount of support from many people in school, and probably your parents/carers as well, and we will do our very best to ensure your application is successful and that you are given constructive advice. Nevertheless, it is **your application** and **you must be certain** every section is **completed properly** and **checked by you before** it is sent to Mrs Done.

STEP – BY – STEP

ENSURE THAT AS YOU COMPLETE EACH SECTION YOU CLICK 'SECTION COMPLETED' AND THEN 'SAVE.' ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE CAN BE FOUND ON THE UCAS WEBSITE IN THE 'HOW TO APPLY' SECTION.

1. **Register** - this will take about 10 minutes if you have all of your personal information in front of you i.e. email address, mobile phone number, the buzzword which will be revealed to you in September (this is very important as it enables us to do checks on your application).
 - **Verify your email address** – the UCAS website will send you an email with a password attached, you will need to access this in order to complete the registration process.

- **Unique Learner Number** – you will be issued with this
- **List of fee payers and codes** - the code which applies to most students is 02 – Applying for student support assessment by LA etc.

In order to be eligible to apply for a student loan you MUST have applied for student support assessment via the LA (code 02). So, even if you know you will not receive financial assistance, you MUST have made the application.

- Keep your **password, UCAS Personal ID and username** safe. If you cannot remember them it will take time to contact UCAS to unlock your application!

2. Section 1 – Personal Details

- Email address – **make sure it is appropriate**, it is useful to include your name as it makes it easier to see it is your address.
- Contact with UCAS (see below)

Keeping you informed about your UCAS application

I want to receive sales information by email Yes

I want to receive sales information by text message to my mobile phone No

I want to receive sales information by post No

These are the methods that UCAS and universities will use to contact you, it may be wise to tick as many options as possible **as long as you frequently check them!**

- Nominated Access – this can be helpful if you are likely to be away on a GAP Year. However, your nominated access person cannot complete the ‘Clearing process’ on your behalf.
- Relevant Criminal convictions – only tick the box if you have one/some!
- Disability/Special Needs – this is your opportunity to disclose any special needs including dyslexia etc.

3. Section 2 – Additional Information

- Ethnic origin and National identity - this information will not be disclosed to your preferred universities until the decision has been made about your application. National identity is how **you** choose to classify yourself. You can select ‘I prefer not to say.’
- Activities in preparation for Higher Education – any Taster courses, summer schools, booster courses. Please keep a record of who ran the courses and when exactly you attended.
- Have you been in care – not compulsory to answer, you can select ‘I prefer not to say’.
- Parental education – not compulsory to answer, you can select ‘I prefer not to say’.
- Occupational background – compulsory to answer, but you may choose ‘I prefer not to say’. This information is disclosed to your preferred universities before a decision is made, some universities use it for statistical purposes others use it as part of the selection process. If you are unsure, check with your preferred universities before applying.

4. Section 3 – Student Finance

- Most students answer ‘Yes’ to all three of these statements.

5. Section 4 – Choices

- Ensure that you have the following correct for each of your choices

- Institution Code.
- Course Code.
- Campus Code (if applicable).
- Start date – you may defer at this stage or later in the process.

These are your responsibility to check. If they are incorrect you will have wasted one or more of your choices!

6. Section 4 – Education

- Add all of the educational institutions you have attended from age 11.
- Check your GCSE qualifications are correct.
- For each of your subjects decide which one of the following descriptions is correct and follow the guidance to enter the qualification information correctly;

Entry of Qualifications

- All A Level modules and the overall A Level grade are entered as ‘pending’ for 2018, if it is to be continued in Year 13. Please don’t forget this, if you don’t put pending in here, we can’t add your predicted grades!

7. Section 5 – Employment

- Employer name - this is the company **not** the name of the manager or supervisor.

8. Section 6 - Statement

- See below for further guidance.

9. Section 7 - Pay/Send

- This will be made available for parents on the website ‘parentpay’ section. Remember the application will only be send to Mrs Done. It won’t be sent to the universities until thorough checks have been made.

Writing your Personal Statement

Section 6 of the form requires you to write a **Personal Statement** in support of your application. What you write here is likely to have a decisive bearing on whether you receive conditional offers from universities, particularly those where the competition for places is most intense. You should therefore be working on a draft during Term 6 in Year 12. It is essential that your Tutor has a copy of this by **before the end of the summer term**. Tutorial time will be dedicated to the completion of your UCAS application during Term 6.

The Personal Statement is your only opportunity to ‘sell yourself’ to a university. The statement should be **4,000 characters, or 47 lines, at the most** – and carefully chosen words at that. Write in **complete sentences**, and recognise that lists are not permitted. Avoid any information that is misleading, fictitious or trivial.

The principle 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. The key aspect to consider is to show how you have “super-curricular interests”, that is how you have extended your A-Level interests beyond what goes on in the classroom. Throughout, specific examples are far more convincing than general statements, so instead of saying “I want to read geography etc, because I am very interested in it” you could say “My travels in mountainous areas and my fascination with upland landscapes have developed my interest in the relationship between past and present day geomorphological processes and the landforms of highland regions”. Remember that under this “one form” application system you can only offer one account of yourself and we can only write one reference; this will mean that if you wish to apply for one subject at some universities and a different subject at others you have to write your account of yourself with particular care.

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

Common English errors

Academic subjects are not proper nouns so should be in lower case, e.g. “history”. In the subject “English literature”. The word “English” is a capital letter because languages are proper nouns.

Avoid colloquial language e.g. “stepping stone” or “thinking outside the box”, better to use “equipped” or “analytical thinking”.

Avoid over long sentences, make sure you punctuate where appropriate.

Use active verbs which make your sentences more “punchy”. For example, “I achieve extremely high scores in my essays...” NOT “In my essays, I achieved high scores...”

Think carefully about the adjectives you use. Avoid on-line thesauruses and never use a word where you’re unsure of its use. So for example, “I am an eager consumer of quality media” is fine. But using a thesaurus without care can result in sentences like “I am eager to devour the media”, which is incorrect and just weird.

Paragraph One

- **Justify your choice of degree course.**
- Outline clearly the reasons for selecting your course/subject(s). Explain specifically what it is that excites you about the course/subject(s), and make **explicit reference to examples** of topics, lessons, practicals, research, fieldwork, projects and reading outside the syllabus, including your EPQ, if applicable (If you are intending to apply for a joint honours degree 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 the research that you have done. You might also want to explain how your chosen subject links with one or more of your A Level subjects, including General Studies.
- Provide some indication of your career aspirations, as applicable, and where possible, establish links between this and your chosen degree course. First paragraph – Why you want to study the subject, why you are well equipped to study the subject
- Show don't tell - Demonstrate passion

Paragraph Two

- Include details about your **academic achievements**, such as prizes awarded and participation in external competitions.
- How have your A-Levels equipped you? Obviously over emphasise the A-Level that is the same or closest to the degree you're studying. Be specific and show how you've engaged with a specific part of the topic area and how you have thought about – demonstrate that you have independent thinking skills.
- Write about what you have done to expand your knowledge beyond the course content e.g. reading, puzzles, TV documentaries, excursions. Think **super-curricular** i.e. beyond your A-Level
- Research a part of the course content that is common to all five university choices and show how you have engaged with this aspect of their course content.
- Focus on the **skills** learnt and practised in your **academic subjects** and how these **link** to your chosen degree course.
- **Relevant** work experience, especially in the case of applicants for courses in **medicine, teaching 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. Universities are now looking for worthwhile activities to be done during Gap Years.

Paragraph Three

This is a golden opportunity for you to **advertise your individual strengths and qualities** and to impress. Include examples of three or four activities which demonstrate: -

- Leadership skills. Universities expect to see these skills, in particular, with examples.
- Capacity for teamwork and your sensitivity to the needs of others.
- Enterprise or originality.
- Contribution to the community.
- Determination to stick at a task.
- Ability to cope with a busy lifestyle.
- Problem solving.

You may wish to include posts of responsibility, part-time work and hobbies. The activities do not need to be confined to school activities.

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 or paragraph**.

- Explain why you are an appropriate choice to study this degree
- Why you would fit in in university life
- Where do you want to see yourself in the future?

You need to stamp your own personality and originality on the form – this is especially true for the highly competitive courses.

Many universities now list in the **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 Admission Criteria Profile then you must give examples of the attributes they are looking for in your Personal Statement.**

Check and proofread your Personal Statement **several times**, print it off to proofread. When you are happy with it seek additional support to improve it.

There are many people in school who are able to support you with your application. If you are applying to study a subject, which is one of your A Levels, see your subject teacher or the head of department for support. Their role is to check the **subject content** of your personal statement, not the structure and quality of your writing. They should be able to suggest useful additional reading and areas of knowledge and understanding to include in your personal statement. When you have completed your personal statement, ask your form tutor to comment on it, and suggest amendments. Their role is to check the structure and quality of your writing, they cannot comment on the subject content unless it is their subject area. Your parents/carers are also useful critics, do not miss them out. Your tutor will arrange with his/her tutor group how they wish to check personal statements. **Be careful not to ask too many people to check your Personal Statement for you, everyone will have a slightly different view and you cannot please everyone! Only give it to one person at a time.**

NB: Oxbridge personal statements should come to Mr Allen after you have shown it to your form tutor and before you submit your application form.

Words of Caution

All of your hard work can easily be undone by featuring yourself in a poor light on websites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Ask.fm, Youtube etc. Potential employers and University Admissions' Tutors do not wish to know about your social life, in detail! The internet can be a powerful tool in assisting your decision and theirs! Remember that what appears on the internet now can come back and haunt you later in life.

Make sure you print off a copy of your completed UCAS form and ensure you read over your Personal Statement before interview.

Examples of Personal Statements

Example of a first paragraph - geography

As I watched the steam surge upwards, I wondered what enigmatic force lay beneath my feet? I was completely overcome by the sheer might, mystery and majesty of the Earth. The bleak and barren volcanic landscape of Lanzarote had sparked my fascination for geography. I am interested by Alfred Wegener and his theory of continental drift, involving the break up of the supercontinent Pangaea during the Mesozoic era. I have dipped into chapters from "A Short History of Nearly Everything" by Bill Bryson, which captivated me, making me realise how little we really know about our own planet. Interestingly, Harry Hess' theory of plate tectonics had only been proposed very recently. I was particularly intrigued to read about the ominous hazard posed by the colossal Yellowstone Supervolcano. I find it fascinating that such an event could have repercussions on a global scale, influencing climates across the entire planet.

Example of a second paragraph - politics

Studying politics at A-Level and learning of the unfairness of first past the post and the nefarious influence of money has further fuelled my enthusiasm for the subject. Similarly, in economics I was particularly struck by the injustice of the 2008 crash, the corruption and willingness of those at the top to gamble with our livelihoods and ultimately the lack of accountability for those who nearly collapsed the financial system, strengthened my aspiration for a degree and subsequent career in Politics. This is why I marched in an anti-austerity protest in London, to demand change, and saw how grass roots activism can be a vehicle for progress. My interest in international relations was initially sparked by my trip to South Africa, where we supported vulnerable children, constructing a toilet and beds for their community. While my team members felt inspired to begin a life dedicated to charity, I felt motivated to change the systemic malpractice that pushed these people into poverty. I then read 'The Spirit Level', which added some intellectual rigour to the frustration I felt at political injustice and demonstrated that income inequality affects child wellbeing, prevalence of mental illness, obesity and education in many societies including South Africa and the UK. I reject functionalists who argue that these inequalities are a facet of a stable society, in doing so they fail to see the toxic impacts of inequality and justify a society that is unable to progress.

Example of a second paragraph - medicine

My aspiration to study medicine has been confirmed by my work placements. I was exposed to patients with a range of mental illnesses during my time at a residential home, and I will always remember the relationship I developed with one lady who spoke endlessly to me about her loved ones. This taught me that effective interpersonal skills underpin the work of a great healthcare professional. To extend my knowledge of mental illness, I read 'The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat' by Oliver Sacks. Captivated by the complexities of the proprioceptive system, I researched proprioceptive dysfunction, and the implications it can have on the lives of patients. I spent an additional six months volunteering in a special needs school, where I saw how mental illnesses affect young children's lives. Here I learnt the rational, patient-centred approach that the staff must undertake during pressurised situations. This was also evident when I spent time at a maternity hospital, where I discovered the personal sacrifices that the staff must make in order to perform their jobs to the best of their ability. This placement enhanced my interest in obstetrics, which developed after reading humorous tales in 'One Born Every Minute: Real Stories from the Delivery Room'. Consequently, I completed an EPQ investigating links between prenatal smoking and complications arising during and after a pregnancy. Alongside increasing my fascination of the topic, I gained scientific knowledge beyond the school curriculum, for example the role of cotinine from cigarettes in triggering the increase in PROKR1 protein, which is known to raise the risk of ectopic pregnancy.

Example of a second paragraph – English literature

English, for me, is not just a subject of study, but also an obsession. Still, to say that I enjoy the study of English is not quite right. At times I am frustrated by my own limitations. Occasionally I am struck by how small my efforts are, adding my own interpretations in pencil in the margins of books written years before I was born. Still, reading has always been the fundamental core of my welfare, and I actively seek new books almost daily. In particular, I love the works of Charles Dickens, and admire greatly his ability to combine succinct, elegant description with well-conceived plots and believable, entertaining characters. Tolkien is another favourite; I have grown up loving his work and inherited my fascination for etymology from reading his essays. George Orwell and Victor Hugo are also compelling writers, whom I fervently adore. I also appreciate modern authors such as Donna Tartt and, P. D. James, both of whom combine contemporary themes with an elegant and sure-footed narrative, and I have chosen to study *The Children of Men* at A Level. I respect the poetry of Sylvia Plath and Emily Dickinson, but more than this, I admire form poetry, such as *The Lyrical Ballads* by Coleridge and Wordsworth, of which particular favourites are 'We Are Seven,' and 'The Thorn.' Further to this, I adore Wilfred Owen and Walter de la Mare, and in my childhood read Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear. My appreciation of plays is not limited only to Shakespeare and John Ford, whom I have studied at school. Recently, I have read and enjoyed the works of Oscar Wilde, following a visit to a stage production of 'The Importance of Being Earnest', and I also appreciate a number of modern playwrights, such as Alan Bennett and J. B. Priestley.

Example of a third paragraph – Business

I am active outside of school in extra-curricular activities, all of which provide me with the skills and attributes for success at university. I arranged for my work experience to be undertaken at Telford Tennis centre, which is a major centre within the West Midlands. During this week I was given the chance, to learn how GLL (a charitable enterprise) works and as a result of my placement, my interest for business management has deepened. As well as tennis coaching I was given the chance to learn how GLL uses multiple marketing tools to connect with customers, how the enterprise uses certain business techniques and conducted basic administration. The centre was suitably impressed with my efforts and commitment and they have invited me to continue as a casual worker, coaching a variety of age groups and from this I have furthered my leadership and communication skills. My current employment is based upon practical teaching and I believe that this is a key asset to have when entering different business areas. I have never wavered in my desire to follow the challenging profession of Medicine. The chance of being able to enter such an exciting and ever-changing vocation is enthralling and I look forward to the day that I can become a similarly compassionate and respected character to the GP who initially inspired me to begin my journey towards this career.

Example of a concluding paragraph - Engineering

The future requires well-informed and practical engineers to ensure that as resources become increasingly stretched, the needs of the world's population can still be met. I look forward to facing the varied challenges and rewards that engineering has to offer, with the ultimate aim of becoming a Chartered Engineer.

Key Dates & Deadlines

End of Summer Term Year 12

Draft personal statement deadline.

For all candidates your personal statement needs to be completed, except for your examination grades and A Level subjects.

18th September year 13

Internal deadline (Oxbridge, Medics, Vets and Dentists)

By this date your completed application must be submitted.

For all candidates applying to Oxford or Cambridge and for all Medical/Dental/Veterinary courses your UCAS deadline is **15th October**.

Before October half term year 13

Internal deadline (all other applicants)

By this date your completed application must be handed to your tutor.

The final external deadlines for candidates is **15th January**.

11th December year 13

Final internal deadline

By this date your completed application must be submitted.

Any applications received **later than 3:30pm** on this date cannot be guaranteed to arrive at UCAS on time.

From application

- You are likely to get an offer from your universities straight away.
- If you applying for Oxford or Cambridge or anything related to medical degrees you may need to attend an interview. Mr Allen will offer mock interview practice if you ask him.
- If you are applying for a contextual offer (e.g. Birmingham A to B) this is the time to submit that application, when you have made your full UCAS application.

May year 13

When you have received all of your offers you will need to select a firm and an insurance choice (just in case you don't get the grades for the firm choice). May 2021 is the deadline for doing this.

