

**UCAS APPLICATION  
GUIDE  
for L6th PUPILS  
& PARENTS / CARERS  
2021**



## 1. Choosing a Course

No one else can decide which course is the right one to study at university except the person going! It can't be a decision made on a whim; university is hard and expensive so it has to be the right course and the right location. Making the right course choice can make or break a person's university experience. The Complete University Guide offers this advice for choosing a course:

There are over 30,000 courses offered at UK universities. While this vast array of choice means that the right course is out there for you, it can be challenging trying to find it.

- **Choose the right subject area.** Some students apply to university knowing exactly what they want to study, but most are faced with a huge variety of courses and subject areas to consider.
- **Find the type of course that suits you.** Do you want to study a BA or BSc? Are you interested in a joint honour? Do you need to study a Foundation Year or Access Course first? How about an integrated masters, placement year or year abroad?
- **Decide how to study your chosen course.** There are a number of different ways to study, including: accelerated degrees, part-time study, distance learning, and degree apprenticeships.
- **Consider your career opportunities.** Graduate prospects vary depending on which subject area you choose to study.

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/courses/choosing-a-course>

UCAS also has a comprehensive section designed to help with course choices:

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/ucas-undergraduate-what-study>

- If you are considering an **Art and Design Foundation Course** then please see the separate information sheet about this option.

## 2. University Visits

During the Summer Term, universities hold their Open Days and it is unlikely that too many of these will take place in person this year. In lieu of in person Open Days over the last year many universities have started offering "virtual" experiences and the ones I have seen so far look very good. You won't necessarily get the full real life experience of the university, but it will give you a feel for the place and certainly help you create a short list without having done proper visits. Although this is not a total replacement for visits, every Year 12 pupil in the country will be in the same position and so you won't be disadvantaged. The universities will still be trying to sell themselves and so I imagine will invest quite heavily in these online virtual experiences and tours in order to attract potential students.

The questions below are good for consideration, in terms of virtual tours. There are a lot of questions and not all will apply to you, just think about the ones that are relevant to you and your family!

You will be able to find most of the answers in the prospectus and on the university website, but it is still worth going through these questions as you may not have thought of them all.

### **Questions to ask about the course:**

- This should be your top priority line of questioning - after all, the course should be the reason you're going to the uni!
- What grades do you need – and can you still get a place if you don't quite get the grades?
- Which qualifications and combinations of qualifications do they accept/prefer?
- If they use the UCAS tariff, will they count all your qualifications?
- Is it worth applying for more than one course?
- How do they select which candidates to make offers to?
- What do they look for in your application and personal statement?
- Can they recommend any reading or activities to inform your personal statement?
- Do they hold interviews or is selection based on your UCAS application?
- How do they feel about gap years and deferred entry applications?
- Is it an advantage to get your application in early?
- What does the course cover?
- How many hours a week will I be in timetabled teaching?
- How much flexibility is there in terms of units you study?
- What assessment methods are used?
- What's the split between lectures, tutorials and self-directed study?
- What size are tutorial groups?
- What deadlines will you have to meet?
- Does it have the facilities you expect?
- What opportunities are there for you to broaden and deepen your understanding of the subject?
- Are placements or study abroad on offer, where are they, how are they organised, are they paid, how do they affect tuition fees?
- What are the pros and cons of taking a joint or combined course?

### **Your career prospects - what happens after:**

- How will the course make you more employable?
- Do they offer or arrange placements?
- What have previous students gone on to do after graduating?
- What proportion go on to postgraduate study?
- Do you need a postgraduate course to get a job?
- Do they know what past students are doing two or three years later?
- What careers guidance facilities are there?
- Do they run job fairs?

### **Questions to ask about the accommodation:**

- Is a place in halls guaranteed?
- What accommodation is available off-campus?
- Would a place still be guaranteed if you made the uni your insurance choice?
- What does it cost – and what's included in that cost?
- Will you have to move in and out each term?

- What are the pros and cons of catered versus self-catered?
- How big are the rooms – are some bigger than others?
- How secure is it?
- Do most students stay on campus at weekends?
- What happens in years two and three, do you need to find a house share?
- How far will you have to travel to get into uni and around town?
- Can you bring a car?
- What are the options if I don't get into halls?

### **Questions to ask about societies and things on campus:**

- What's on offer here that will provide opportunities for you to develop your employability skills?
- Are there any connections with local employers?
- Are there any jobs on campus available for students?
- Are there any volunteering opportunities?
- What academic and pastoral support is available?
- What sports and societies are available?
- What are the transport links like?
- Are most things available on campus?

### **Questions to ask about your everyday costs:**

- How do the costs actually break down?
- How much money will you need to survive?
- To what extent will you need/be able to find part-time work?
- What bursaries, scholarships or fee waivers are there and how do you apply?
- How do placements or a year abroad or a year in the industry affect your costs or tuition fees?
- What's on offer in terms of cheap student deals/nights out / places to eat?

### **Questions to ask current students: (If you have the chance to)**

- What are the best and worst things about uni in your opinion?
- How have you found the course so far – what are the teaching/ facilities/support/field trips like?
- Are some halls of residence better or worse than others?
- What's the town/city like?

Looking at these questions and making a short list of universities can seem overwhelming at first but it doesn't need to be overly complicated; having a priority list to work from can help. For example, is the course itself or the location of the university more important to you? Is there a big difference between the cost of living in the cities you are considering? What support is available in terms of SEND or mental health at the university? These are just a few of the considerations and working out what your non negotiables are will get you started e.g. the course has to include a certain topic.

There is more excellent advice on the UCAS website at this link below, as well as a portal to find all the virtual open days being offered:

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/events-and-open-days>

### **3. The UCAS Application Form**

Application for university in the UK is done using the UCAS application form system. For the current L6th this will be **open to start inputting information from May 18th 2021.**

The form starts with basic information about the pupil, name, DOB, address etc. and will move through listing educational qualifications such as GCSEs as well as predicted grades for the A Level subjects being sat (more information to follow on this in the coming weeks). Once the form is open for application pupils will have PSHE sessions on specific and detailed guidance about completing each section.

TWGGGS operates an earlier deadline system than the UCAS deadline. This ensures that the UCAS application form is done and dusted by October half term at the latest in order to allow pupils to focus on the rest of their studies without this hanging over them. We find this works well and so the application deadlines are:

**Oxbridge/Medicine/Vet Science/Dentistry - 17th September 2021**

**All other courses - 1st October 2021**

#### **3a. Course Choices**

There is then the opportunity to choose up to 5 courses to apply for; for most pupils this is 5 courses at different universities but they can be different courses at either the same or different universities. Some pupils choose not to use all 5 course options but they then run the risk of not gaining a place at the ones they do apply for and limiting their options so we would always advise pupils to make use of all the option slots available. The exceptions to this are as follows:

##### **Applying for Medicine:**

Pupils applying for a "Medicine" course are only able to choose up to 4 courses each. This can then be supplemented by a 5th choice which is not Medicine, e.g some pupils choose to add a 5th choice of Biomedical Science or Pharmacy or another related course in case they are not successful in their applications for Medicine. The Medical Schools Council website below has excellent and detailed advice for anyone looking to apply for Medicine. Once we are back at school then support sessions for these pupils will also be taking place. It is worth noting that Medical Schools use additional tests, often the BMAT or UCAT but there are a few others and more information can be found on the MSC website as well.

<https://www.medschools.ac.uk/studying-medicine/applications>

Another very useful website is The Medic Portal which provides free guidance and preparation help:

<https://www.themedicportal.com>

In the past, we have linked with Med Soc with Medic Mentor <https://medicmentor.co.uk> which provides some free advice and mentoring.

### **Applying for Dentistry:**

Pupils applying for a “Dentistry” course are only able to choose up to 4 courses each. This can then be supplemented by a 5th choice which is not Dentistry, e.g some pupils choose to add a 5th choice of Biomedical Science or another related course in case they are not successful in their applications for Dentistry. This Dental Schools Council website below has excellent and detailed advice for anyone looking to apply for Dentistry. Once we are back at school then support sessions for these pupils will also be taking place. It is worth noting that Dental Schools use an additional test, often the UCAT but there are a few others and more information can be found on the DSC website as well.

<https://www.dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk/studying-dentistry/making-an-application/>

### **Applying for Veterinary Science:**

Pupils applying for a “Veterinary Science” course are only able to choose up to 4 courses each. This can then be supplemented by a 5th choice which is not Veterinary Science, e.g some pupils choose to add a 5th choice of Bioveterinary Science or another related course in case they are not successful in their applications for Veterinary Science. This Vet Schools Council website below has excellent and detailed advice for anyone looking to apply for Vet Science. Once we are back at school then support sessions for these pupils will also be taking place.

<https://www.vetschoolscouncil.ac.uk/study-and-training/applications/#studying-veterinary-medicine>

### **Applying for Oxford or Cambridge:**

Pupils do still get 5 course choices (unless they are applying for Medicine, Dentistry or Vet Science), however pupils cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge in the same year, it is one or the other. Most courses at both of these universities now use additional testing as well as interviews in addition to the UCAS application; the course guide on the university website would give more information about that process. This website below is a good starting point if you are considering Oxbridge.

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/universities/applying-to-university-and-ucas-deadlines/guide-to-applying-to-oxford-and-cambridge>

It is important to note that all of these options above (Medicine, Dentistry, Vet Science and Oxbridge) have an earlier application deadline than all other courses. Deadlines will be confirmed by school as soon as possible, but the deadline for these courses will likely be mid-September.

Universities offering Medicine, Dentistry, Vet Science and Oxbridge courses require candidates to have an interview. In order to facilitate this, we organise practice interviews. Mr Jones, CL Chemistry, offers practice interviews for Medicine, Dentistry, and Veterinary Science, and Miss Smith, Head of 6th Form, Mrs Smith, Assistant Head of 6th Form and some other members of staff offer practice interviews for Oxbridge courses, or other courses which invite candidates for interview. We often get ad hoc invitations from other local schools to join their interview practice sessions e.g. at Skinners or for any information evenings they hold about these options. Miss Smith will always keep you informed of any of these opportunities as and when we are informed of them.

Pupils looking at Medicine, Dentistry, Vet Science or Oxbridge should have already been getting additional information to support their application via the relevant Google Classroom page.

### **Applying for Performing Arts Conservatoires:**

UCAS Conservatoires is a specialised online admissions service for undergraduate, postgraduate, other music and some dance and drama programmes at these UK conservatories:

- Birmingham Conservatoire
- Conservatoire for Dance and Drama
- Leeds College of Music
- Royal Academy of Music
- Royal College of Music
- Royal Northern College of Music
- Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
- Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
- Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Applicants can create a single electronic application that will be submitted simultaneously to a maximum of six conservatoires.

- Students may also make a separate application through UCAS to other universities and colleges offering music, dance and drama courses, although they can only accept a place through one system (i.e. via either UCAS Conservatoires or UCAS).
- Auditions take place at the individual institutions.

More information on Conservatoires and these courses can be found on the UCAS website:

<https://www.ucas.com/conservatoires/conservatoire-study-right-me>

### **3b. Personal Statement**

One of the most significant parts of the UCAS application is the personal statement. This doesn't need to become a huge and stressful task if pupils are organised, start early and do

the appropriate research and preparation. The maximum size of the UCAS personal statement is 47 lines – approximately 500-550 words, size 12 font. The maximum number of characters is 4000, and this *includes* spaces.

There are some generic pieces of advice that will apply to all applications and then there will be some specific pointers depending on what course and which university is being applied for. Once you have decided which course/s and which universities you are applying for, check their websites for tips on what they are looking for in a personal statement.

The personal statement should demonstrate how and why you're a fitting candidate for their course – and the institution as a whole – through:

- your passion for the subject or field, including specific areas or topics you're interested in
- how you've made an effort to engage with your subject already
- what you've learned or how it's developed your understanding of your area so far
- what you want to do in the future

Most importantly, everything in the personal statement needs to be linked back to the course that is being applied for. It's important to note that you only write one personal statement, which is seen by all the universities you apply to.

Unlike your grades or admissions test scores, which many other candidates may also have, your personal statement is the main way you can distinguish yourself from the rest of the pack (so you're not just another UCAS number). After all, three As at A Level is impressive, but it doesn't tell someone about your long standing passion for your subject, perspective-changing work placements, long-term goals etc. Plus, your personal statement is written in your own words. Your statement can form the basis of an interview if you're invited to one; so you can use your statement to get an admissions tutor excited about meeting you, as well as shape what you might talk about. Admissions tutors you speak to in Clearing – should you go through this – can see your personal statement too, and may ask about what you write here. In fact, we recommend re-reading your statement prior to results day, to refresh your memory about what you wrote.

### **How do I write a personal statement?**

You'll likely go through a few drafts before you get the final version you submit, so don't expect to have it done in a weekend. The sooner you start the better, just don't leave it until the last minute!

**Start with your subject** - It's pretty much impossible to start your personal statement without a degree subject in mind. It would be like applying to an unknown job by simply stating your general strengths, these won't necessarily be relevant. It's easier with a few courses in mind. While you can pull together a rough draft while still researching specific courses, it can help to have a solid idea of your five UCAS choices (or at least most of them). See what they have in common (eg modules, key skills required, modes of assessment) and highlight these in your statement.

**Make it personal** - The key word is 'personal'; this doesn't mean pouring your heart out or emotionally blackmailing an admissions tutor! And while you can ask a friend for their advice or look at statement templates, what works for someone else won't necessarily work for you. Remember, any statements that show signs of plagiarism will be flagged by UCAS' system and will hurt your chances of applying.

**Oxbridge vs non-Oxbridge** - Personal statements for Oxford and Cambridge tend to be more focused on academics, serving as a platform for you to discuss your understanding and thoughts on material that you've been exposed to. There is advice on the Oxford and Cambridge websites about the style of personal statement they are looking for.

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/guide/ucas-application>

<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/find-out-more/teachers-and-parents/helping-students-prepare>

### **What do I write in my personal statement?**

Below is a rough solid six-point plan from The Student Room to start you off, it doesn't have to end up in this order but this will help you ensure all the main things are included:

1. Introduction - Why you want to study this course or subject at university. Remember, your personal statement is seen by all your UCAS choices; so don't make references specific to one university.
2. Academics - Specifically subjects you've studied that are relevant to the course/subject you're applying to, including specific topics or work. This section should make up the majority of your personal statement – around 75% according to some careers experts – but this might vary depending on where/what you're applying to (e.g. Oxbridge where they look for at least 80% and over of academic content) and what else you have to talk about. For instance, a law or medicine applicant may want to invest more time talking about relevant experience they've accumulated.
- 3 Interest in your subject beyond the classroom - This could be through books or journals you've read, events you've been to, podcasts you've listened to etc. Don't just make a long list though; pick one or two key examples and focus on these. Don't be afraid to be critical either; critical analysis is a key skill at degree-level study. You may want to combine this with the next section.
4. Relevant work experience (paid or unpaid) - Like the section above, it's quality over quantity. Pick out one or two key experiences or placements, talking about what you did and what you took away from these. Did anything surprise you? Did it convince you to pursue a certain area or career (or did it even put you off one)? Read the course description for all the courses you're applying to, and pick out the skills or qualities that pop up frequently (then show how you've demonstrated these).
5. Hobbies and interests - This section should be brief, sticking to the most relevant ones only. These could be extracurricular activities that demonstrate key transferable skills that aren't necessarily tied to your subject. For instance, being captain of a sports team shows

you can work with others, communicate clearly, lead and motivate others, etc – all of these are impressive to an admissions tutor, regardless of subject. Remember, that you're writing to an official institution in an academic context; keep in mind how someone with no prior knowledge of your interests, might perceive them. An older academic may not quite appreciate your interests in the same way as your friends.

6. Conclusion - This should reiterate the key points you've already made, giving your statement a satisfying sense of closure. If you have an idea of your future ambitions (e.g. postgraduate study, career paths), explain how studying this course will help you fulfil these. Alternatively, you may talk about your broader goals for university, or areas you're looking forward to studying.

Keep the above in mind as you plot out, draft and re-draft your statement. What can you leave out of your personal statement? You don't have a whole lot of space in your statement; so think twice about including these things below (or simply cut them entirely):

*Cliche phrases:* things like 'Since I've been a child' and the P-word (aka 'passion') can find themselves in your personal statement all too easily, and everyone else's, too. Be original!

*Famous quotes:* admissions tutors want to see what you think, not Nelson Mandela or Maya Angelou (and not over the course of reading a hundred statements). Unless it's a lesser-known quote that illustrates your point, try not to use them (or at least, don't start your statement with them).

*Complicated vocabulary:* if you can say something in five simple words rather than ten, do that. You don't want to risk looking silly and using a word the wrong way, nor making your statement difficult to read.

*Humour:* your statement is a formal essay with a lot riding on it, and you want to show that you're taking your UCAS application seriously. Humour is really subjective and easy to get wrong, it's best to just steer clear.

- Although there are many, many examples of UCAS personal statements online, you must write it all in your own words as UCAS has a sophisticated plagiarism filter that all applications pass through and if any issues are detected then this will not look good to the universities you have applied to.
- The UCAS website has a very detailed section on personal statements that everyone should have read before they get started on their own!

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement/how-write-personal-statement>

#### **4. Work Experience**

Some courses (for example Medicine and Vet Science) will expect a candidate to have some work experience in the relevant field of study. All pupils completed two weeks of work

experience at the end of Year 11 and this can be used, although ideally the experience would be more recent than this.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in person work experience is unlikely to be available for pupils in Year 12 at all before their application is due. This should not be something pupils worry about as all candidates will be affected by this and universities will take it into account. There are a number of organisations and establishments offering virtual work experience in light of this current situation. A Google Search for “Virtual Work Experience” plus your chosen subject also gives you plenty of relevant online information about various opportunities available.

## **5. Additional Admissions Testing for some UCAS Applications**

If the course you are applying for requires you to take an additional admissions test e.g for Medicine, Dentistry or Oxbridge courses, each pupil will be responsible for finding out what test is required for their chosen course. School is not responsible if a pupil fails to book or misses a test for a particular course.

The tests cost money:

BMAT: The fees for 2021/2022 have yet to be published. It is very likely that there will be an increase on the 2020/2021 fee which was £59.00 (this includes a £10.00 administration fee).

TMUA: The fees for 2021/2022 have yet to be published. It is very likely that there will be an increase on the 2020/2021 fee which was £43.00 (this includes a £10.00 administration fee) in 2020/2021

Oxbridge Admissions Tests will cost £10.00 (this is an administration fee) in 2021/2022

All of these tests can be taken at school on Wednesday 3rd November 2021 and an application form and details of how to pay for the test will be available from Mrs Barker, Examinations Officer at the beginning of September.

<https://www.admissionstesting.org/> - Good overall starting point for finding out about admissions testing if your course requires it. This website also has links to past papers for the tests and guides you through how to book them etc.

<https://www.uniadmissions.co.uk/ukcat-vs-bmat-which-to-take/> - a useful guide to making a choice between UCAT and BMAT for Medicine

BMAT - <https://www.themedicportal.com/application-guide/bmat/>

UCAT - <https://www.ucat.ac.uk/ucat/registration-booking/>

Please be aware that the final registration date for UCAT is much earlier than for the other admissions tests, usually in the middle of September and the final test date is usually at the beginning of October (dates are still to be confirmed at the moment). All places to sit a test are subject to availability, so don't leave it until the last minute to book your test!

## 6. Staff Support Available

- Your form Tutor will be the member of staff writing your supporting reference for the UCAS application and so you need to communicate well with them about your intentions in terms of course choices. A number of tutors will soon be giving out a questionnaire regarding this and if they don't use the questionnaire they will likely have their own system for collecting information from pupils that they will be using soon as they prepare to start writing references. Talk to your tutor about your application and keep a good line of communication open.
- Your **personal statement can be checked by up to two members of staff in school, one of which is your form tutor**. It is highly recommended that you get a member of staff from the department related to the course you are applying for to be the other member of staff checking it as they can give you specific advice related to the subject. There is no merit in having your personal statement read any more than this; each person who reads it will have their own opinion and multiple opinions may well confuse you or cause undue stress!
- Miss Smith, Mrs Smith and Mrs Hutchinson are all available to help with and check any aspect of the UCAS application and again, we encourage all pupils to communicate any issues at the earliest possible point so that we can help, problems aren't left unresolved and an application deadline is not missed, in the worst case.
- Mrs Hutchinson and Mrs Ellinson are both available to discuss careers in relation to your application and have a wealth of knowledge and experience regarding this that you could tap into.

## 7. Deadlines

- It would be good to make a start on your personal statement as soon as you have chosen a course and ideally you will then **have your statement largely written by the start of the summer holidays**. This includes having had it checked. This will prevent lots of last minute rushes and panics in September!
- For **Medicine/Dentistry/Vet Science/Oxbridge** your UCAS deadline will be 17th September 2021
- For **Performing Arts Conservatoires** your UCAS deadline will be **mid September, although some conservatoires set their own deadlines which can be as early as the end of August so you must check the deadline of the individual establishment if you are applying to a conservatoire.**
- For the **majority of other applications** your UCAS deadline will be the **1st October 2021**