



Applying for Apprenticeships

Applying to University

An Essential Guide for Parents and Students

June 2017

Applying for Apprenticeships or to University.

Information for Year 12 students and parents.

This booklet is designed to help you all work your way through the university application process as well as providing information relating to apprenticeships.

I realise that some students are not planning on going to university and they should have been to see me to discuss their future plans. There have already been several meetings for those considering going straight into work or an apprenticeship and students who have attended these meetings are familiar with the processes.

Initial student research.

It is most important that students do a lot of research before they make any decisions about which universities they want to apply to. There are over 300 institutions offering university degree courses and students can only apply to 5 at most, so thorough research is essential.

- ❖ The best starting place is the UCAS website - www.ucas.com. Students are already very familiar with this website.

Apprenticeships

Students should now have signed up to the government apprenticeship site. Details of other non-university options can be found on page 5 "Resources in School".

The UCAS website.

UCAS is the organisation responsible for managing applications to higher education (HE) courses in the UK. The UCAS website is one of the most popular websites in the UK; it has a comprehensive online database of over 50,000 HE courses at more than 300 universities and colleges that are members of UCAS. The courses have what are known as "entry profiles", which give extra information, such as: the content of the course; who it might be suitable for; what the entry requirements are; how it is assessed; potential career opportunities and student satisfaction. All course details (including information on fees, bursaries and financial support) are supplied directly by the universities and

colleges themselves. The information on the UCAS website is updated daily, so there's no danger of students wasting their time wading through out-of-date information. Students can search for the courses in their chosen subject and, if need be, restrict their search to one university or college, or to a specific region of the UK, by using the search tool.

Apprenticeships

I do recommend the UCAS website which also has a great deal of information about apprenticeships too.

What now?

Between now and the start of next term students have been told that they have to research courses and universities looking at every aspect possible - course suitability with personal interests, likely entry grades required - do these match the students' real ability?, bursaries and scholarships available, location, accommodation options, extra-curricular activities and so on. All of this information can be found easily using the UCAS website which students can already navigate their way around. Students have already covered a significant amount of research using the UCAS site in their PSRE sessions and I would expect all students to spend a considerable number of hours doing further research on courses and universities between now and early September.

Apprenticeships

For students who prefer the apprenticeship route, they should have set up "Alerts" from the government apprenticeship website and be acting on the information given.

UCAS Parent link.

There is a very helpful section especially for parents which I strongly recommend and this can be found on the UCAS home page. It features articles on issues including finance, student welfare and selecting the right course and university. There is plenty of advice and tips that parents need to support their son's application.

You can sign up for the parent newsletters too which offer advice through the application cycle. In previous years parents have found this information invaluable.

University League Tables.

Many parents consult these when helping their son to choose a course or university. There are several league tables published in the UK which all use different weightings and methodology, so it makes sense to compare them. I recommend that these are used together with information gained from prospectuses and websites as well as an understanding of the student's strengths and interests. There are 2 websites which we use with the students to help them compare universities they are considering. These are <https://unistats.direct.gov.uk> and www.university.which.co.uk. These have been very useful and are extremely easy to use.

Key facts.

By the start of next term, Wednesday 6th September for Year 13 students, I expect the vast majority of students to have decided which 5 courses and universities they want to apply to.

Oxford and Cambridge

- Students wanting to apply to Oxford or Cambridge can only apply to one or the other NOT both. We expect students to have expressed a desire to apply to Oxbridge by the start of January 2017 and said students will have already received a significant amount of advice and should be acting on it. Competition is extremely fierce and we advise students honestly about their likely chances of success. Experience tells us that only the very best succeed, namely students with at least the majority of their GCSEs at A*, over 90% in all their AS exams and top grade predictions at A level; not to mention their general academic breadth and genuine curiosity in the subject they want to study. Most successful Oxbridge applicants are top of their year in at least one of the subjects they study. Academic excellence is imperative as is a real enthusiasm and broad knowledge in the subject being applied for. Students who apply to Oxbridge will have aptitude tests in early November which take place in school.

Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine/Science

- Students who want to study medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine/science can only make 4 choices for these subjects but they can make one further choice for a different course if they wish, making a total of 5 choices. Applicants must check whether

they have to do the UKCAT or BMAT and register accordingly. Competition for medicine, dentistry and veterinary science is severe; it must be pointed out that there is less than a 1:2 chance of getting an offer at the first attempt and, in our experience, this is for applicants with at least 7 A* grades at GCSE, and top grade predictions in 4 A levels. Students who are intending to apply for these disciplines have received much advice over the course of the year and should have a significant amount of relevant work experience to discuss in their personal statement to support their application, in addition to having read relevant scientific journals and medical ethics publications as a matter of routine since they started in the Sixth Form.

- Students may apply to do more than one course at a particular university but each course counts as one of the 5 choices. This is not uncommon.
- Students who want to go to university but are not sure what they want to do should have already been to see me. If not they must do so before the end of this term.
- Students who want to defer entry to 2019 still apply this year.
- Students who want to take a gap year and apply once they have left school should follow the process carefully this year so they are familiar with the system when they come to apply. We do support students who choose to apply during their gap year as well as providing an academic reference.

Apprenticeships

For students opting for apprenticeships they can apply for as many as they want and they have already been told how to tailor their application to suit each different apprenticeship. The application dates for all apprenticeships vary considerably so students must read the information they get very carefully.

Resources in school.

There are plenty of books at school in the Sixth Form Centre to support the students' careers/university research, together with prospectuses for most of the universities, which the students have already been encouraged to use to supplement their internet research.

Other useful websites for students not considering university are;

www.kpmgcareers.co.uk/

www.pwc.co.uk

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

www.etrust.org.uk/the-year-in-industry

www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships

I routinely forward all emails with websites relating to diverse career opportunities to the students. They know that they have to research these opportunities independently if they are interested. Obviously they can come and ask for advice and assistance if needed.

We provide support for students who need help completing an application form, writing a CV, interview practice and so on.

University open days.

We encourage students to book Open Days at the weekend, wherever possible. Many universities now favour weekend open days so that parents can attend and students do not miss lessons in school. However, we recognise that some universities do not hold open days at the weekend so we allow students to take a maximum of 3 days off school for such visits. There is a process at school, which the students are familiar with, that they have to follow to get permission from their teachers to attend an open day. We do encourage students to be sensible when booking open days and only visit universities that they are seriously considering. If you are unable to attend an Open Day or would just like to view a university without visiting it there are a number of virtual tours available again through the UCAS site.

The personal statement/CV.

In addition to doing as much research as possible before the start of next term students should also be writing their personal statement to support their university application or their CV to support an application for an apprenticeship or work. The personal statement is the student's chance to tell the universities why they should offer them a place! A good personal statement is very important - it should be obvious from the personal statement that the applicant is genuinely interested in the course. In many cases applicants are not interviewed so the personal statement may be the only chance to make the case for admission. Students should consider carefully the information they give in their

personal statement and the best way to present it effectively whilst being truthful and accurate. They should not be tempted to copy the many commercially available personal statements, which admissions tutors are very familiar with, and UCAS do also undertake checks for plagiarism. The students are told that the personal statement should include the following points.

- ◆ What interests you about your chosen subject. Most importantly include details of what you have read about the subject outside of your AS/A level studies. You must show a genuine enthusiasm for your chosen subject.
- ◆ Any job, work experience, placement or voluntary work you have done, particularly if it is relevant to your subject. Mention skills and experience you have gained from these activities.
- ◆ Any relevant visit to a museum, theatre, concert, exhibition, which may be related to your chosen course and how this has benefitted you.
- ◆ Any involvement in widening participation schemes, such as summer schools or mentoring activities, involvement in master classes or other academic programmes.
- ◆ Details of non-accredited skills and achievements that you have gained through activities such as Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Young Enterprise and National Citizen Service.
- ◆ Any subjects you are studying that do not have a formal assessment (enrichment subjects for example).
- ◆ Involvement in the prefect body, the Leadership Day (March 2017).
- ◆ If you are planning to take a year out, give reasons why. Students should check if the universities they are considering look favourably on gap years or not.
- ◆ Social, sports or leisure interests.

The personal statement can be up to 4,000 characters long (including spaces). It must be in size 12 font Times New Roman. This should be word-processed and once the statement has been approved by the form tutor it can be copied and pasted into the application.

The most important part of the statement is the opening sentence. This should be interesting, but not gimmicky, and captivate the attention of the admissions tutor who will be reading it. It has to be remembered that admissions tutors read thousands of applications so a good opening sentence will encourage them to read further. Students are strongly advised to avoid quotes in their opening sentence.

A recent presentation by a visiting professor from the University of Nottingham gave excellent advice about how to write a good personal statement. Additionally, students will receive considerable advice about writing a personal statement before the end of term so they should have no trouble getting this started. Any student needing further advice should discuss this with their form tutor in the first instance. Additional support can be found on the UCAS website via the home page in the Personal Statement section.

In addition to this, there are some books for use in school giving further detailed advice. These can be borrowed from Mrs James, Sixth Form Centre Manager.

If a student is preparing his CV he should follow the broad principles of writing a personal statement but he should refer to his personal skills and qualities too in a more detailed way.

The university application.

- The actual application to UCAS is done online and students will have been given full information about this during our UCAS day on Tuesday 4th July. By the end of this day they will have started their application and will be able to proceed with it at home during the summer.
- The cost of the application is £13.00 for one choice and £24.00 for two choices or more, but this is not payable online until the application is complete.
- There are many UCAS-based assemblies for the students between now and October half term so they will be kept up to date with what they should be doing and when.

Apprenticeships

Students applying for apprenticeships/work will have scheduled meetings to fit in with the application cycle.

Student loans/Student finance.

The most up to date information about student loans is given as soon as I receive it, normally after Christmas of Year 13. However, students can research this online during the application process. The student loan application is also completed on line and it will usually have to be finalised by the end of May in the year of application unless the student has made a deferred entry application. Student finance information is readily available on line and the online **student finance calculator** is a useful and interesting tool. Students have already had assemblies about student finance and there will be more during Year 13.

Key deadlines for university applications.

The school's deadline for applications for all Oxbridge applicants, those applying for medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine/science is **Friday 22nd September**. For all other applications the deadline is **Friday 13th October**. I strongly advise students to get their application in before these dates if at all possible, as I know from student experience that some universities have previously increased their offer grades for later applications. Please remember that there is a significant amount of administration involved in school once the student has completed his application. However, we do aim to send the application to UCAS within a couple of weeks after the student has completed his application, made the relevant payment and sent it to me electronically.

Apprenticeships

For apprenticeship applications the deadlines range from September 2017 to June 2018, so students have to keep a very close eye on the application timescale of each apprenticeship they are interested in.

The reference.

- Each student has a school reference sent with their university application.
- The referee will have interviewed the student before writing the reference and he/she will also have a subject report specifically for the reference from each of the student's teachers.

- The reference is normally about 300/400 words in length.
- These are positive references which the students are allowed to read and discuss with their referee in school.

Apprenticeships

Whilst compulsory for all university applications, a reference is not always requested as part of the actual apprenticeship application form but we are contacted separately to provide one.

...and finally.

To recap, this is what must be done over the summer holidays.

- Complete all research using www.ucas.com or the government apprenticeship website as the main resource.
- Decide which courses or apprenticeships to apply for and where. BE REALISTIC. Initial choices for university may need to be reviewed once AS grades are known in August.
- Write a first draft of the personal statement/CV which must be brought into school on the first day of term - Wednesday 6th September - for the form tutor to read.
- Potential Oxbridge students, medics, dentists and vets must bring the 1st draft of their personal statement to me by Wednesday 12th July. Their 2nd draft must be handed to me by 8.50 on Wednesday 6th September.
- If any student needs clarification of any of the above he should see me by Thursday 20th July.
- If any parent would like to talk over any aspect of the application now or as the process unfolds, please give me a call.

I wish you all the best as you embark on this task.

Diane Halestrap
Head of Sixth Form
June 2017