



**Ousedale School**  
Aspire | Believe | Achieve

# **UCAS**

## **Student Guide for Applications**

## Important dates

Deadline for completed Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine, Veterinary Studies and Dentistry applications to be with Ms Moulds – **5<sup>th</sup> October**

Deadline for completed applications to be with Ms Moulds – **5<sup>th</sup> December**

Deadline for choosing Firm and Insurance places – **4<sup>th</sup> May**

## **Personal Details**

When you initially register you should select "apply through college or school" when asked, and supply UCAS with the buzzword.

Record your ID number and Password

When asked to supply an email address, give one that sounds professional. If in doubt use your school one.

Student support: It is important you fill this in correctly

Fee Code: 02 UK, Ch!, IoM or EU.

Student support arrangements: Milton Keynes

Nominated Access: If you wish to have someone else talk to UCAS about your applications (ie. a parent) you must allow them access by nominating them.

## **Additional Information**

If you have done work experience relevant to your chosen course (ie. working in a school for a B(Ed) qualification) complete the details here. Do not forget to refer to it in your personal statement.

## **Choices**

Refer to the section on choosing where to study. Double check you get the course codes correct.

## **Education**

Complete details of your GCSE and A levels. Include all results including any U's! Put in details of modules still to sit.

For A levels put the grade as Pending.

Add in any free standing qualifications you may have e.g. Music, D of E etc.

Your form tutor can provide you with a list of results from the school database. You may be required to produce your certificates so keep them safe.

## **Employment**

Complete details of any paid employment you have had.

## **Personal Statement**

Refer to the section on writing your personal statement.

## Choosing Courses

How do you decide what and where you want to study? Here are some ideas to encourage, support and guide you:

Visit [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

Also use Unifrog.

One of the most popular websites in the UK, [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) has a comprehensive online database of over 50,000 HE courses available at more than 300 universities and colleges which are members of UCAS. This covers about 95% of all full-time HE undergraduate courses in the UK.

Nearly 85% of courses on the UCAS Course Search have what are known as Entry Profiles. These are compiled by staff at each university or college, and provide information about the course, specific entry requirements and career possibilities and about the qualities or experience admissions staff are looking for in applicants. Increasingly they are also providing information about an institution's admission and selection criteria, fees, bursaries and financial support, accommodation and access for students with special needs, Open Days and student life. Entry Profiles make it easier to differentiate between courses which have similar names.

You can search for courses in your chosen subject and / or institution or UK region. The information on the website is normally updated hourly, so you will not waste time reading through out-of-date information.

## Which University?

A maximum of 5 choices is available.

•**Tip:** making the right choices matters - you should only apply to places that you want to go to. If you do not use all your choices, you may be able to add another later, as long as you have not accepted an offer elsewhere.

Consider the following:

- Location – Campus, City/Town, City and Campus
- Age/style/academic structure
- Size of University – 3,000 – 35,000 Students
- Distance from home
- Accommodation
- Guarantees, Availability, on-campus support
- Cost, location, catered v self catering, standard
- Facilities
- Teaching, Student support, disability issues
- Social, sports, welfare
- Finances/cultural/family issues

## Which course?

**You should choose 1 “aspirational” course, 3 realistic courses and 1 insurance based on your predicted grades.**

Approaches to course choice

- Familiarity  
Studied at A-level, continuation of interest
- New subjects  
Informed by A-level choices e.g. Biology –Biomedical Sciences, Human Biology, Genetics, Optometry, Zoology; Geography –Business, Environmental Sciences, European Studies, Logistics, Surveying, Town Planning; Maths –Accountancy, Computer Science, Engineering, Internet Gambling Studies
- Vocational degrees –Job at the end e.g. Medicine, Teaching
- Joint degrees  
When deciding between two subjects is tough!  
Subjects equal weighting- 20% more work!
- Combined degrees  
Three or more subjects not necessarily of same weight  
Some employers may want more specialised degree

Choosing the Best

- Unistats (Teaching Quality, National Student Survey)
- Contact time/value for money
- Professional accreditation (e.g. IMechE, BPS)
- Offer Levels, entry requirements, specific subjects
- Applicants per place/competition
- League Tables – useful but treat with caution...
- “Reputation” with Parents/Teachers
- Employability

A level points system

Grade	A2
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

Some universities and colleges require you to pass an admissions test as well

## Helping you to complete your UCAS form


### A2 Subjects

Subject	Predicted Grade

### Higher Education Courses Chosen:

University	Course	Grade requirements

### Tick the following when completed:

		Date
Application complete on line		
Personal Statement		
1 <sup>st</sup> Draft		
Revised		
Completed		
Application ready to send		

## Writing your Personal Statement

You will need to provide a brief but convincing explanation as to why you want to study your subject at university. Think of the ‘personal trigger’ that got you interested in the subject. This could be a book, a museum trip, a documentary, a childhood experience, a teacher, work experience, etc. Go on to develop this line of thought with why this subject is important and inspiring to you and discuss what it is that motivates you personally to study this discipline. Talk about why you think this subject is significant to society perhaps by relating it to current affairs. Be specific – don’t just say you love English or Maths, say why, and never, ever say ‘I always wanted to study...’ and you should talk about what it is you hope to get out of your university degree.

Having given a broad account of why you love your subject, focus on specific areas of interest within it. So, having described the significance of Physics in your life, now go on to say how it’s really the module on Astrophysics that gets your pulse racing and in what way you hope the degree course will develop your passion further.

What was my personal trigger?
How does my subject relate to society or current affairs?
Which aspect am I really looking forward to studying in more detail? Why?

Some students like to start the statement with a quote from an expert in the field, famous author or scientist. Admissions tutors tell us it is only acceptable to do this if you directly relate it to your course and why you want to study it, show that you understand the concept of the quote and make it flow neatly into your introductory paragraph.

## Your interest in the Subject

Start with what you've been doing in school to develop your interest in the subject. Have any of your A Levels given you the opportunity to study the subject in some detail? Which aspects did you enjoy? Why did you enjoy them and how does it relate to the course you want to embark on? If you are studying a completely new course that is not offered or you have studied at A Level, think about the skills you are learning in your current studies that will be useful for your degree, such as essay-writing, critical analysis, research or logic. Write down everything you can, it can be edited later on.

	A Level One	A Level Two	A Level Three	A Level Four	A Level Five
Skill 1					
Skill 2					

Talking about your love of your A levels simply won't be enough and this section should not form more than 2-3 lines of your statement. Remember to:

- Write down extra-curriculum activities you have undertaken in pursuit of a greater understanding of your chosen degree subject. You can include brief details on any trips, books, documentaries, research or experiences you found inspiring and why – that is exactly the kind of evidence of your interest in the subject that tutors are looking for. Why does this activity make you more suited to the course? Again, be specific. For example, an applicant might explain how their school trip to the Somme gave them a genuine sense of the importance of history as a 'real life' phenomenon: something that exists beyond the pages of a text book and how it has really got them excited about studying the early 20<sup>th</sup> century French history module in great depth at university. If you've undertaken any work experience related to the course then write it down here, along with any skills you have developed along the way.
- One of the main differences between university and school is that there's no one looking over your shoulder, making sure you do your homework. You have to show that you are the kind of person that can motivate yourself to do things outside of the classroom or lecture theatre. You've got to be honest about the things you have done. This is especially true when you might be asked to an interview: if you wrote something down in a panic because it sounded good and then forgot to research it, you could find yourself in trouble! You shouldn't need to struggle too hard to think



of things – if you are genuinely interested in the subject you will be doing things that develop your interest.

- If you have a definite or even a rough idea of what to do when you graduate, and your university degree is a stepping stone towards that aspiration then you may wish to write it here. Do not worry if you have no idea, many people don't. If you're a budding medic, dentist or similar then you will go further depth, but for all others remember that you are applying for an academic degree, not a job so don't focus too much on your career.

So, what have you done out of school that would impress an admission tutor? Tick all that apply to you and are relevant to the course you have chosen and make notes on what you learnt that will come in useful for your course. You are NOT expected to have done everything on the list!

Activity	Tick	Description	Why has it made you more suitable?
Outside reading	✓	Reading the Economist regularly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding economic concepts</li> <li>• Keeping up-to-date with current affairs</li> </ul>
Outside reading			
Theatre trips			
Exhibitions			
School clubs			

Clubs outside of school			
Voluntary work			
Museum trips			
Historical sites			
Trips abroad			
Community activities			
Documentaries			
Articles			
Hobbies			

Work experience			
Competitions/prizes/awards			
Published work			
Workshops/programmes			
Summer school			

## Wider Skills

This is where you will give an account of your non-academic achievements either in or out of school and your interests and hobbies. Cover any extra-curricular activities not necessarily related to your course and give the admissions tutor a glimpse of the kind of person you are outside of the classroom and most importantly what skills you've developed through those interests, work experience or a part-time job.

Below is a table for you to fill in examples of how you've developed some key skills. Fill in the table as best you can first.

<b>Skill</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Communication	
Commitment	
Time Management	
Teamwork	
Initiative	
Public Speaking	
Sense of responsibility	
Adaptability	
Organisation	
Leadership	
Research & analysis	

## Gap Years

If you are taking a gap year and applying for deferred entry then you must explain what you plan to do – give details! Telling the admissions tutor about your plans for the year ahead shows that you are organised and want to pursue interests outside of your studies. It is even better if you can relate your plans to the course or university life.

Plans for my gap year
How will I fund them?
What am I hoping to achieve?
How will this help me with either my degree or university life?

## Summary

Finish the personal statement with a one or two line summary of why you want to go to university and study the course and why you deserve to be offered a place.

Here are some examples

“Overall, I am a *hardworking*, active person and I am enthusiastic about achieving my goals and becoming a primary school teacher. I am looking forward to university life, both academically and socially.”

“I am mature, confident and self-motivated all qualities that I believe are critical to a successful university experience. I relish the opportunity to study accounting and finance to degree level and hopefully beyond.”

“I feel certain that this subject will provide, me with the intellectual challenge best suited to my *personality* and ambition of pursuing an academic career in the social sciences. The prospect of studying such a stimulating and dynamic course truly excites me.”

## Your First Draft

Look back at the tables you have filled in – it might not look like it at the moment but this is your first draft! The next step is to choose the most important points to include, and start turning your notes into well written prose.

So what are the admissions tutors looking for? Well, first and foremost it is things you have done in and out of school which show passion for the course, and the more outside of school evidence the better. Skills such as time management and teamwork are great, but secondary to evidence of a desire to study a subject. If you can 'double up' on skills and talk about things you have done which demonstrate your interest in the subject at the same time as one of these skills, then great! For example, if you did work experience at your local health centre in the pursuit of a degree and career in medicine, as well as developing your interest you may well have picked up excellent communication skills by answering the telephone, contributing to meetings, and interacting with staff and patients.

Go back and look at all that you wrote down, and highlight, or circle the aspects that you think an admissions tutor will be most impressed by, and re-write them as bullet points in the space below:

Introduction
Your interest in the subject ( in school )
You interest in the subject ( out of school )
Personal
Summary

## Positive Phrasing

Furthermore	Enable me	In addition
Used my initiative	Thrive under pressure	Strengthen
Explore my interests	Enhanced	Skills I have gained
The opportunity	Participated in	As well as
I learnt from	Reinforced	This has furthered my
Moreover	Commitment	Taking part in
Creatively	Using my initiative	I undertook
I particularly enjoyed	Responsibility	My passion for
I continue to develop	This has expanded my knowledge of	I have acquired skills which....

DO NOT use any negative phrases in your statement – words like never, hate, useless, mistake etc. – you can turn anything into a positive learning experience!

Choose some of the phrases above and start putting your sentences together, section by section, crossing them off as you go along to avoid repetition. Try and think of phrases of your own too for originality.

Once you have put all your experiences into sentences, and formulated an introduction then you are well and truly on the way to an excellent personal statement. Check the number of words to fit if it fits, but don't worry if not because it can be re-drafted until it's right.

## Re-drafting

Checking and editing your personal statement is a vital task so don't leave it to the last minute. Once you have written your personal statement on a computer (make sure you save it carefully), give it a couple of days before you go back and begin editing it. While you read through it, make a note of the changes you want to make and repeat the process several times to make sure you have checked it thoroughly. Then ask teachers, parents and friends to check through your statement for you.

## What to include in your personal statement

If you have a record of achievement/personal profile or up-to-date CV it can remind you of activities to include. As a guide, only current or recent activities should be referred to. In the personal statement, the admissions tutor would hope to find:

- An organised and literate presentation, with no obvious mistakes in paragraphing, punctuation, grammar or spelling.
- Clear layout and development of ideas.
- Clear indication of your motivation towards or relevant background for the courses applied for. *Ask yourself: Why do I want to study the subject? Is there something I can say about how my interest has developed or how I have pursued it to make it convincing (may be especially important if you have applied for something you've not studied before).* Be specific and give examples. Evidence of commitment beyond the curriculum is welcomed and for competitive programmes will be vital.
- Evidence that you realise what the study of the subject is likely to entail. *Ask yourself: Am I mentioning only the exciting or accessible aspects of this subject or associated career? Do I know the subject broadly enough? I am prepared for the breadth of a university programme?*
- Interests of relevance to the course at their institution. *Avoid writing your personal statement to support only one of your applications, even if its your favourite. Write separately to that selector with additional information if you wish.*
- Discussions of work experience, especially if relevant to the course. For some programmes – for instance medicine, physiotherapy or teaching, some courses in media – work experience will be vital. It can also be useful for subjects that may turn out to be harder work or less glamorous than their image (archaeology, law).
- Information about extra-curricular involvements and activities, life experiences and employment. These can help to demonstrate general levels of energy and enthusiasm, some capacity for time management and setting of priorities and can evidence key skills. They may also be relevant to the course being applied for. A reflective and well organised presentation of this information is advantageous; you need to point out the relevance of your experience even if the bare facts are mentioned elsewhere in the form.
- Mention of career plans or gap year plans, if real and relevant.

## Production of the personal statement

- Use 12-point type and decent margins.
- It must be a maximum of 4000 characters including spaces.
- Allow time for proof reading and editing.
- Let other people read it; they may spot problems or opportunities that you haven't.



## Prompt List

### Action Verbs

Accelerated	Directed	Maintained	Reinforced
Accomplished	Effected	Managed	Re-organised
Achieved	Eliminated	Mastered	Researched
Adapted	Engineered	Mediated	Responded
Administered	Established	Modified	Restricted
Advised	Evaluated	Monitored	Reviewed
Analysed	Expanded	Motivated	Revised
Approved	Explored	Negotiated	Scheduled
Arranged	Experienced	Operated	Selected
Attracted	Facilitated	Optimised	Set up
Built	Found	Organised	Simplified
Calculated	Guided	Originated	Solved
Communicated	Generated	Participated	Specialised
Compiled	Handled	Performed	Stimulated
Conceived	Implemented	Persuaded	Structured
Conducted	Improved	Pinpointed	Supervised
Consisted	Increased	Planned	Supported
Contributed	Influenced	Presented	Taught
Controlled	Initiated	Processed	Tested
Convinced	Inspired	Produced	Trained
Co-ordinated	Instructed	Programmed	Translated
Created	Interacted	Promoted	Utilised
Decided	Interpreted	Proposed	Won
Delegated	Introduced	Proved	Worked
Demonstrated	Launched	Provided	Wrote
Designed	Lectured	Qualified	
Developed	Led	Recommended	
	Liaised	Reduced	

### Action Adjectives

Ability	Enthusiasm	Active	Proficient
Capacity	Flexibility	Competent	Profitable
Ambition	Opportunity	Consistent	Resourceful
Awareness	Perception	Efficient	Responsible
Capability	Potential	Effective	Substantial
Commitment		Pertinent	Successful
		Positive	Technical
		Productive	Versatile

## What next?

Once you have completed and entered your Personal Statement on the UCAS Apply website, inform your Tutor that this is done and also let them know what you are hoping to study at University. You **do not need** to have made your final choices at this point.

Your tutor will then request references from each of your subject tutors.

Once completed, these will be collated, along with some information about the school, yourself and your predicted final grades entered into UCAS Apply by your tutor.

### **Predicted Grades:**

Do not ask subject tutors to inflate your predicted grades, as this may lead to receiving offers that you cannot meet. Ensure that you apply to courses that match your ability.

The reference needs to be approved by the Head of Transition before your application can be completed.

The later you leave your request for references, the longer this will take as there will be a queue to be processed.

## UCAS Offers

UCAS will contact you with details of offers made by universities.

Some university courses will send out offers as soon as applications arrive, others will wait until March/April when they have received all applications. Do not worry if your favourite does not respond quickly.

If a university rejects you, read the reason given but do not lose heart. Many university courses receive thousands of applications for a small number of places.

Read any offers very carefully, making sure you understand exactly what the university requires and which of your A2 exams qualify.

If you are asked to attend an interview, confirm your acceptance of this as soon as possible. You will be allowed time out of school for this [make sure you complete a yellow form].

If you are asked to provide any certificates of qualifications, forward them straight away. If you have any queries, contact the university in question.

When you have received all of your offers you must decide which to firmly accept and which to accept as your insurance. If you meet the criteria for your first choice, UCAS will assume that is where you are going. Make sure you are certain on this.

Your insurance choice is a backup of where to study if you fail to meet the criteria of your first choice. **Your insurance choice should require lower grades than your first choice.**