

UCAS & Higher Education Information

Dear Parent/Student

The information that follows provides a full guide to the process of applying to Higher Education, and forms the basis for students' UCAS preparation. As well as *information sheets* and useful *website links*, there are *templates* to support students' planning and preparation of their application.

Thank you to Mr Doran for putting much of this together. We trust you will find it useful. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

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Introduction – applying to university for 2020

In the current economic climate, applying to university has become a decision one cannot take lightly. Students realise that, although tuition fees do not have to be paid ‘up front’, the prospect of finishing with a sizeable debt to pay off over years, means they have to be convinced it is a valuable investment.

A positive benefit to tuition fees is that universities are having to become more accountable to their consumers, and this is bringing welcome changes in the quality of assessment and feedback, and of teaching generally. The provision of grants and bursaries has also improved enormously too. This means that *for some students, university is more accessible than it has ever been.*

A further benefit of the move to tuition fees has been the removal of a ‘cap’ on student numbers, particularly for those students achieving the higher grades. The demographic trend at the moment also favours the current cohort of students as there is a continuing downward trend in the number of 18 year olds in the country.

In the words of one university Vice-Chancellor, graduates are still ‘happier, healthier and wealthier’ than non-graduates. At Richard Challoner, we remain committed to doing all we can to support all our students who wish to go onto further study into a Higher Education course.

This booklet offers your son/ daughter a step-by-step guide to researching, deciding and applying for Higher Education via UCAS. The pages, links and folders have been arranged sequentially, as far as possible.

An enormous range of courses & entry requirements

The main qualifications:

Foundation degrees are intermediate qualifications that combine academic and work-based learning. They are intended to equip learners with the skills and knowledge relevant to their chosen field of employment. They usually take 2 years to complete and give an FdA or FdSc award. Foundation degrees can also provide a route to full degree studies.

It would be impossible to list the wide range of Foundation Degree courses available, but you can find courses in many areas of Business, Catering, Construction, Design, Engineering, IT, Marketing, Media, Health, Sport etc.

General Entry Requirements: Set by each institution / course. In general, it is expected that students will have a Level 3 qualification or equivalent.

HND/HNC courses are similar to Foundation Degrees. They are vocational courses, usually lasting two years which lead to a Higher National Diploma (HND), Higher National Certificate (HNC). Most HNDs can lead on to a full degree. A *Diploma in Higher Education* (DipHE) is a qualification accredited by a professional body, and provides access to professions such as nursing and social work.

General Entry Requirements: As for Foundation degrees.

Undergraduate Degree Courses

Full or Honours Degree Courses

Degrees in arts and humanities subjects are normally awarded a BA (Bachelor of Arts), while science-related subjects are awarded a BSc (Bachelor of Science). Full degree courses generally take 3 years. *Sandwich courses* - which include periods of practical work in organisations outside the university or college - usually last 4 years.

General Minimum Entry Requirements:

- **Usually 5 GCSEs at grade 4 or above, including English Language and Mathematics or a Science.**
- **At least 2 Level 3 qualifications at grades E (or equivalent) or above.**
- **Most courses only accept students who are aged 18 at the time the course starts.**
- **Students whose first language is not English need a recognised English Language qualification e.g. IELTS (See [IELTS website](#))**

Key Tip: Remember to check the general AND specific entry requirements of each institution and course

HE Institutions & how they differ

'Physical' differences

Universities are very diverse in size, tradition, subject mix, facilities and location.

The universities of Oxford and Cambridge date from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

In England, the older universities were established by Royal Charter or statute.

“Redbrick Universities” are those founded in the 1950s and 1960s.

Former polytechnics were given the status of universities under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. These are sometimes called new universities. They range in size from 4,000 students (University of Abertay, Dundee) to 28,000 students (Manchester Metropolitan University).

The Open University

This is the oldest and most successful institution in the UK offering ‘distance learning’. This allows students to study at home at their own time, on a more flexible schedule. Fees are paid by monthly instalments. See more at www.open.ac.uk

Futurelearn

Began in 2013 and offers **MOOCS** (massive open, online courses) through several leading universities – Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, East Anglia, Exeter, Lancaster, Leeds, London (King's), St. Andrews, Southampton and Warwick. The Open University will also offer courses. Find out more at www.futurelearn.com or the universities listed above.

Differences in quality

There are no official government university league tables. Some newspapers - The Guardian, The Independent and The Times - have their own tables.

Universities, like schools, are subject to periodic inspection by the **Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education** (QCA). However, its reports don't go into detail about specific courses or departments.

Perhaps the best available information about specific institutions and courses is the **National Student Survey** results, which are published on the [UNISTATS](http://www.unistats.ac.uk) website.

24 of the leading UK universities for research are known as the **Russell Group**: Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Imperial College London, King's College London, Leeds, Liverpool, London School of Economics & Political Science, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Queen Mary University London, Queen's University Belfast, Sheffield, Southampton, University College London, Warwick and York.

Competition for places at these institutions is usually very competitive: as high as 20 applicants per place on some courses.

Key Tip: *Applicants stand a stronger chance of getting a place at Cardiff, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Liverpool, Queen's, Belfast, Queen Mary College, Sheffield and York than at the other Russell Group institutions.*

Teaching and Learning

There is a vast range of teaching and learning styles in Higher Education institutions. Lectures and seminars are the most common. Depending on the course, there may also be group projects, presentations, module and/or synoptic assessment by assignment or exam.

Some courses allow for a period of work abroad and/or in industry. These are known as 'sandwich courses'.

Career v Cost: Is Higher Education worth it?

All the available research suggests that getting a degree improves career opportunities and leads to higher salaries. However, the reform of apprenticeships, and especially, the provision of higher and degree apprenticeships offer very important alternative pathways for many school leavers, which should be thoroughly researched.

Despite the general advantages, we encourage all our students to weigh up the cost of going to university and the job opportunities for graduates very carefully, given the current economic climate.

The pages and links in this section will help you to research

- the possible career paths open to graduates
- the likely job prospects for different undergraduate degree courses
- the skills and aptitudes that employers are looking for from graduates
- how much degree studies will cost you
- what financial help may be available

Graduate Employment links:

[Explore graduate job opportunities](#)

[What graduates do](#)

Student Finance links:

[Student Finance website](#)

[University Bursaries, Grants and Scholarships](#)

NB Check University websites for cost of living information

[Helpful advice from Martin Lewis' website](#)

Tuition fees

Universities and colleges can charge new students up to £9,250 a year (up to £9000 in Wales).

Most students take out a **student loan** to cover the cost of tuition fees, accommodation and living expenses. You only start repaying this loan once you have finished studying and are earning more than £25,000 a year. The loan will be increased in line with the rate of inflation, but commercial rates of interest will not be charged. Loans have to be repaid, but grants, scholarships and bursaries do not.

You should apply for the student loan as soon as the website is live – just enter the details of your firm choice place. If necessary, you can inform Student Finance England (SFE) later.

For full details on applying for student finance, please [click here](#).

Maintenance Loans

Maintenance loans help with living costs. Please [click here](#) for details on maintenance loans and for a maintenance loan calculator. (A proportion of the loan is available without means testing; the rest is subject to means testing.)

Bursaries and Scholarships

There are bursaries and scholarships available at most institutions. The awarding of bursaries is usually dependent on household income, whereas scholarships are available for exceptional performance, regardless of household income. Please see [this link to the UCAS website for further details](#).

Please encourage your son/ daughter to ensure they have signed up for the GrantFairy app for up-to-date information on scholarships.

Further details on undergraduate fees and student loans are [available here](#).

Living expenses

These vary greatly, depending on where you are studying, and especially, whether you are living at home or are paying for your accommodation. The cost of living is higher in some parts of the UK than others. For example, rent can vary from £30 pw in the North East, to over £250 pw in London.

To manage your finances carefully, you will need to have a clear picture of your income and essential expenses. By subtracting these from your income you will know how much you can spend on other things. The lists below give an idea of what these might involve:

Essential Costs

- Tuition fees
- Rent
- Travel
- Contents insurance
- Car bills
- Credit card payments
- Utility bills, e.g. gas, TV licence, phone etc.
- Food, drink etc.

Income

- Student loan
- Grant or bursary*
- Sponsorship*
- Scholarship*
- Parental/guardian contributions
- Income from a job
- Savings

*subject to entitlement

Other Expenses

- Books/equipment
- Household goods
- Clothes/shoes
- Music/films
- Social activities

Your HE OPTIONS

Overview Questions:

1. Do I want to continue my education post-18 at a university or a college?
2. What course(s) would be best to study?
3. Which institution(s) would be most suited to my needs?

By the end of Year 12, some students already have their future career plans firmly decided and know what HE qualification they need to reach their goal. They may well feel confident about their choices and the steps they need to take in the future. *However, they may be over-confident or unrealistic.*

Others, perhaps the majority, do not have a clear career goal, and therefore aren't sure whether to continue in HE, or if they should, what course they should take. Doubts of this type can lead to feelings of anxiety and insecurity. *There is no need to worry, but there is no excuse for putting things off. If you are waiting to be certain about your future, you'll be waiting a long time!*

Some students are quite sure that university is not for them – they have had enough of books and writing, and now they just want to get a job and earn money. Some may know what type of work they would like to do; others may not. *That's fine, as long as you have looked at all the options, listened to advice, and have worked out an alternative job plan. It may be well worth starting the application process, even if you don't expect to go to university, since that way you can keep options open.*

Key Things to Remember:

- Don't put off difficult and important decisions about your future - **keep to the school deadlines for UCAS applications.**
- Don't dismiss the idea of going to university just because no one in your family has been, or out of misguided prejudice.
- Get a clear idea of what you can realistically aspire to - and what you can't.
- Be keen to seek out and listen to the advice of others!

Deciding what to study and where

This is a long, complex and difficult process.

The pages and links in this section are designed to help you go about it in a thorough and methodical way.

It is particularly important that you take notes as you research, so as to avoid having to go back to check over important details.

Weblinks:

Key Sites:

 [UCAS website](#)

 [UNISTATS](#)

 [UCAS – Parents' Newsletter sign-up](#)

 [University Open Days](#)

Newspaper guides and rankings

 [The Guardian University Guide](#)

 [The Complete University Guide \(The Independent\)](#)

 [The Independent - Student Section](#)

 [The Times Good University Guide](#)

Other unofficial university guide

 [Independent University Guide - Push](#)

Foundation Courses:

 [Foundation Degree information & search](#)

Dentistry, Medicine, Veterinary courses:

 [Dental Schools Council website](#)

 [Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons](#)

 [Alternative Careers in Veterinary Science](#)

 [GMC – Promoting Excellence](#)

 [UKCAT](#)

 [BMAT](#)

 [Medical Schools Council](#)

Oxbridge:

 [Cambridge Undergraduate Admissions](#)

 [Cambridge Application Process](#)

 [Cambridge Undergraduate courses](#)

 [Cambridge Colleges](#)

 [Cambridge Supplementary Application Questionnaire guide](#)

 [Oxford Application Process](#)

 [Oxford Undergraduate Courses](#)

 [Oxford Colleges](#)

 [Oxford Interview Guide](#)

 [Parent's Guide to Oxford Applications](#)

 [Oxbridge Admissions - applications and experiences](#) – this is an unofficial website in which Oxbridge applicants have logged their experiences of interviews.

What restrictions are there on course choices?

The UCAS system imposes some important restrictions on the number and range of courses you can apply for:

- You only write one personal statement that is sent to all the universities you apply to, so the same statement has to 'work' for all. In practice, this means that you should only apply to courses which are confined to one or two subject areas.
- **FIVE** degree courses (including more than one course at the same institution);
or
- **FOUR** in the case of (i) Medicine, (ii) Dentistry and (iii) Veterinary Medicine or Veterinary Science;
- or
- **THREE** courses for Route B Art & Design.
- You CANNOT apply to both Oxford and Cambridge.

What type of degree course appeals to you?

Choosing a Degree Course

Here are some initial ideas to consider about the type of course you want to study:

1. to continue with a subject you are studying in the Sixth Form and are familiar with, e.g. Maths, Physics, Art.
2. a completely new subject – maybe one not available at A Level, such as Social Anthropology, Marine Biology, Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Linguistics or Genetics.
3. to link two subjects together in a joint degree course. These could be two familiar subjects or two new subjects or one of each.
4. to study three or more subjects in a combined or modular degree.
5. a vocational degree course leading towards a particular career (e.g. teaching, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, and physiotherapy).
6. a sandwich course (4 years) which will include a year in the workplace or abroad.
7. a foundation degree

What to look for in a UCAS search result

Key Tip: The UCAS search facility gives a helpful summary, but it is just that, a summary. You MUST research the details of course in the university prospectus or website!

The **SUMMARY** of the course on the UCAS website gives the following information:

- Summary of the course at that university
- Type/ length/ mode of qualification
- Methods of assessment
- Application codes
- Entry requirements
- Fee information

- On the right hand side, you can click through links to the university's website for more details – highly recommended!

UNISTATS

On the Unistats website you can view **official statistics** and **the National Student Survey** data for one or more universities and courses. *The data is based on the experiences of students who completed their degree the previous summer.*

UCAS points & Entry Information

Gives a detailed breakdown of the UCAS points students' gained, and what they had done before starting the course.

Student Population

Provides detailed information about the ratios of full, part-time and overseas students, and male/female ratios.

Degree Class and Continuation

This page shows results obtained by students, as percentages. By itself, it is difficult to draw many solid conclusions from this information. You might be concerned if a course had produced 'unclassified' or 'ordinary' degrees. However, when you compare it to comments made by students about academic support or assessment, then it can be more useful (see National Student Survey information).

Employment Prospects

Here the top ten employment sectors students got jobs in are shown.

Uni details

The *Uni details* page provides summary statistics about the university, and relevant contact information.

The National Student Survey

This is a confidential survey. Students are asked 22 questions grouped in six categories:

- Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course
- The teaching on my course
- Assessment and feedback
- Academic support

- Organisation and management
- Learning resources
- Personal development

You can view summaries of the students' responses as percentages (the number who responded is also given), or you can click on any category and view students' responses in detail (in each category, students score the course out of 5).

The NSS data is extremely useful. The best way to find out about a course is to ask people who have done it. Using the NSS you can get the overall opinions of many such students. The student response-rate itself can say a lot about how happy students are with a course.

Look in detail at the six categories. Depending on the course and your particular needs, you may focus on some of them more than others. For example, *Learning resources* may be particularly important for practical, scientific or technological courses.

You can get some idea of how friendly and helpful members of staff are from student responses in the *Academic support* and *Personal development* sections.

Whatever course you choose, you should pay special attention to the *Teaching and Assessment and Feedback* responses.

The New UCAS Tariff

The Tariff converts different qualifications into common entry points to Higher Education. Some of the UCAS tariff is shown below.

Other qualifications also earn you points, e.g. Music Grades, ASDAN, CACHE etc.

[Check here for more details of the New Tariff.](#)

The table below shows the new Tariff points for key qualifications.

| Extended Project Qualification | AS level | A level | New Tariff points | BTEC Subsidiary Diploma | BTEC Certificate | L3 Cert in Higher Sports Leadership |
|--------------------------------|----------|---------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | A* | 56 | D* | | |
| | | A | 48 | D | | |
| | | B | 40 | | | |
| | | C | 32 | M | | |
| A* | | | 28 | | D* | |
| A | | D | 24 | | D | |
| B | A | | 20 | | | |
| C | B | E | 16 | P | M | P |
| D | C | | 12 | | | |
| | D | | 10 | | | |
| E | | | 8 | | P | |
| | E | | 6 | | | |

Some typical offers and points

| | |
|--------|------------|
| A*A*A* | 168 points |
| A*AA | 152 points |
| AAB | 136 points |
| ABB | 128 points |
| BBB | 120 points |
| BCC | 104 points |
| CCC | 96 points |

N.B Many universities are showing their typical offers in just grades or in grades and points.

To calculate the value of your points, including certified AS, EPQ and other qualifications (e.g. Music grade exams) see:

[UCAS TARIFF CALCULATOR](#)

Aptitude Tests

BMAT for Medicine to Oxbridge, University College and Imperial College London, or Veterinary Science (Bristol & Royal Veterinary College).

Oxford University Aptitude Tests are required for a number of courses - see the link for details.

LNAT National Admissions Test for Law used by 11 law schools.

STEP required for Mathematics at Cambridge and Warwick, and encouraged by Bristol, Oxford and Imperial College.

UKCAT An aptitude test for Medicine and Dentistry used by 26 universities.

Cambridge Admissions Assessments These were introduced for 2017 entry and are required for a range of courses at Cambridge.

Websites:

- [BMAT*](#)
- [Oxford Courses requiring admissions tests*](#)
- [Cambridge Admissions assessments.](#)
- [LNAT](#)
- [STEP](#)
- [UKCAT*](#)

*IMPORTANT: Deadlines and test dates vary from year to year, so check the relevant website well in advance

Shortlisting Courses

Use the UCAS website, university prospectuses, UNISTATS and other sources to make your initial shortlist. You don't need to use all the spaces provided, but there is no harm in having quite a long shortlist!

| University/ Course | Course code | Entry requirements | What I like about it | Any negative factors? |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
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| | | | | |
| | | | | |

University/Course analysis sheet

For courses/institutions that really interest you, making a record of important information about it based on information found on the websites for UCAS, UNISTATS (UNIS) and, most importantly, the university's own course web page can be really helpful:

Course:

Institution:

Degree type: (BSc/BA...) Length (yrs):

Required grades/points:

Required/preferred Subjects

Required/preferred Units:

| | |
|--|---|
| Course Entry Profile (if applicable): | |
| Fees: Bursaries and scholarships: | |
| Course structure, content, assessment methods, (and professional accreditation if applicable): | |
| Information from Unistats (e.g. level of student satisfaction, graduate employment rates, etc) | |
| Accommodation: | Living Costs: |
| Social, cultural & sporting facilities: | Questions to ask at Open Day/interview: |
| Impressions from Open Day: | |
| Overall assessment: | |

Special Needs

Universities and other higher education institutions are extremely well-equipped and well-funded to meet the learning needs of students. However, many young people don't make sufficient use of the help that is available to them.

It is great if students with learning difficulties are able to go to university, and admirable that they be determined to 'stand on their own two feet'. While encouraging students to be autonomous, we hope they also realise that we all need the help and support of others, and so they should not be reluctant to apply for the support they are entitled to.

Besides, if it turns out they don't need it, nothing has been lost. On the other hand, if they do not apply, they will not be eligible for help they may really need.

Entering your needs on your UCAS application

When you complete your online UCAS application, you are able to tell the university in advance of your learning needs, by answering the question: *what support do you require?* In your answer, give details of

- your disability, special need and/or medical condition;
- any arrangements that you have needed, or found helpful in your learning up to now (e.g. a reader, scribe, extra time, etc.)

If you do require support, DO NOT leave this question blank.

Example UCAS entry:

| Disability/Special needs | |
|--|--|
| Category | You have two or more impairments and/or disabling medical conditions |
| Please give details of any special needs | I have Asperger's Syndrome and am dyslexic |

The first entry is made by choosing from a drop-down selection. The second is one that you type in yourself.

Universities and colleges will consider your application on the same academic criteria as any other, and any medical information will remain confidential.

If a university or college cannot meet your needs, you can ask UCAS to substitute another choice.

As soon as you receive your first offer of a university place, you can apply for a **Disabled Student Allowance (DSA)** through your Local Authority.

Applying for a Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)

Key things to know:

- It is available for anyone doing at least 50 per cent of a full-time course
- It is non-means tested: in other words, it is not linked to your parents' income
- It consists of a number of allowances:
 - General Allowance: books, photocopying, consumables
 - Equipment Allowance: desktop computer, software, recording devices, etc.
 - Specialist Equipment Allowance
 - Non-Medical Helpers Allowance: IT training, study skills support, readers + scribes etc.
 - Travel Allowance

For help and information, see

- the UCAS website: <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/individual-needs/disabled-students>
- DSA Local Access Centre: <http://www.ace-assess.org/>

Preparing the UCAS application

What are admissions tutors looking for?

There may be differences between institutions and courses about the priorities, but all expect evidence of the following:

Academic potential - the more your actual academic performance and predicted grades exceed the minimum entry requirements asked for by the course, the stronger your application will be. If you have done especially well in any elements of the course so far, you can ask your referee to make specific mention of them in the school reference. If there are particular personal circumstances that may have adversely affected your GCSE or End of Year 12 results, let your referee know, and provide relevant medical evidence.

Enthusiasm & Interest - your school reference and your personal statement should be full of examples of how your interest and enthusiasm for your chosen course of study has been exhibited in and out of school: participation and engagement with the subject, involvement in super-curricular activities, work experience, visits, trips, taster courses, etc.

Relevant experience - some courses, especially those leading to a profession such as law and medicine, expect applicants to have done relevant work experience and voluntary placements.

Personal qualities and transferrable skills - the way you write about your interest for the subject, what you have gained from your relevant experiences, and what you show of your leisure interests and hobbies, will reveal a lot about your personal qualities and those skills which are useful in a variety of situations: personal organisation, reliability, honesty, the ability to communicate effectively, teamwork, use of ICT, etc.

How will your application be initially assessed?

An Admissions Tutor may need to sift through thousands of applications for just a hundred or so places. Initially, the basic requirements of applications are considered and *if they are not met, the application could be rejected outright*:

1. **Age**: Students at HEIs are usually expected to be 18 by the October they start.
2. **Type of qualifications**: GCSE grades, predicted A Level grades need to show that minimum entry requirements can be reached. Some courses/institutions expect to see particular grades at GCSE.
3. **Basic requirements**: e.g. English Language qualification / Maths GCSE at 4/5 or above.
4. **School Reference** written by your Mentor.
5. Your **Personal Statement** - poor spelling/grammar could be sufficient for your application to be rejected.
6. Some courses require you take an *Admissions Test*.

If your application satisfies the basic requirements, it will be considered further and in more detail.

The Personal Statement

Your Personal Statement should match your *motivation* (for carrying on your education), your *enthusiasm* (for your chosen course), and your *relevant skills and experience*, with those the university is looking for.

Unless you are called for interview, this is your only chance to show the admissions tutors that you are right for the course, and that the course is right for you.

Be careful with your grammar and your spelling – it is essential that your personal statement is written correctly and well presented. Do not rely on the spell-checker!

All applications are electronically checked for **plagiarism**.

MAKE SURE THE WHOLE STATEMENT IS YOUR OWN WORK.

Some technical details

Most personal statements are about 600 words (2/3 of an A4 page typed in 12 pt) in length. You can enter up to 4,000 characters (this includes spaces) or 47 lines of text (this includes blank lines), whichever comes first. You do not have to use all the space provided.

The online system is such that you cannot use *italics*, **bold**, underlining or foreign characters (such as á, ë, ñ) in your personal statement - the system will automatically remove these when saved. This will not disadvantage your application.

Draft your personal statement in a word-processor first. When your mentor is happy with it, you can upload it onto your application. If it is too long, a message will show by how many lines/characters it is too long. It will not be saved until it is reduced to be within the character limit.

Useful Online Guides:

YouTube video

[How to write an excellent personal statement - Imperial College](#)

Which Guide

[Which subject specific advice on writing personal statements](#)

Admissions tutors ask ‘Would it be enjoyable to teach this student?’

- Specific aspects of the course that interest you
- Examples of coursework you have been particularly engaged by
- Practical work you have enjoyed and why
- Books, articles, etc. you have read related to the subject area and questions that these have raised / ideas sparked by these
- Work experience or voluntary work in this area and what you have learnt from this
- Conferences you have attended (or visits/ trips made) and ideas/ specific interests sparked by these
- Personal experiences that have led to the decision to take this subject
- Where your hope a degree in this subject will take you in the future

Things your Personal Statement should demonstrate clearly

- Your motivation for your chosen course - this is particularly important when you're applying for a subject that you have not studied before.
- Evidence that you understand what is required to study the course, e.g. showing an awareness of how scientific a psychology course is.
- How your current or previous studies relate to your chosen course(s).
- Why you want to go to university or college.

Examples of skills and aptitudes valued in academic life

| Resilience | Resourcefulness |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Perseverance | Curiosity |
| Managing Distractions | Flexibility |
| Focused | Questioning |
| Courage to take risks | Imagining |
| Independent | Analysis |
| Methodical | Thinking |
| Open minded | Playful |

| Reflectiveness | Reciprocity |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Reasoning | Interdependence |
| Re-working | Receptive |
| Making links | Attentive |
| Evaluating | Collaboration |
| Accuracy | Empathy |
| Distilling | Listening |
| Noticing | |
| Planning | |

Use the planning sheets on the next pages to help you gather your evidence together and plan your personal statement effectively before writing it.

Planning your personal statement: the 75%

This is not so much about having done lots of activities (although that does reveal a genuine interest and commitment in itself), but more about what you have learnt from these. (Print out/ use as many of these as you need!)

| Super-curriculum activities: What I've read/ watched/ done related to the subject I'm applying for ... | What did I learn? What was most surprising about it, and why? What did I find most interesting, and why, and how have I followed up on that interest? What questions did it make me ask (and what kind of answers occurred to me/ did I investigate)? How do I think what I've learnt could be applied? |
|--|--|
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Planning your personal statement: the 25%

This is about 'proving' that you have the skills/ attributes that will make you successful at university/ in an apprenticeship/ school leavers' programme/ job.

| <p>What have I done? (eg. piece of work, activity, sport participation, music – learning an instrument/ playing or singing in a group, drama, exam result, work experience, D of E, Scouts, visit, extra-curricular activity etc)</p> | <p>What skill(s)/ attribute(s) needed for success does this show? How? (eg. resilience, determination, time management, attention to detail, creativity, communication skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork, independent work, resourcefulness, initiative, leadership, making connections, courage to take risks, open minded, curious, evaluation, planning etc)</p> |
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Punctuation rules

QUOTES & CITATIONS

If you include a quote in your personal statement, it should be in quotation marks: “...”.

USE OF CAPITAL LETTERS

The personal pronoun 'I' is always written with a capital letter.

Capital letters are used with:

Names and titles of people *Winston Churchill* *the Queen of England*

Titles of works, books etc. *War and Peace* *The Merchant of Venice*

Titles of degree courses *Economics, Medicine, Zoology*

Months of the year, days of the week, seasons, holiday periods *Summer, Boxing Day*

Geographical names... names of countries and continents, regions, states, districts, cities, towns, villages, rivers, oceans, seas, lakes, geographical formations

Europe, Switzerland, Lake Geneva, the Alps etc.

Adjectives relating to nationality or historical era

Chinese restaurant, German literature, Victorian architecture

Names of streets, buildings, parks etc.

Capital letters are used for the following nouns related to school life:

Year 12, Sixth Form, Form Tutor

ALL SCHOOL SUBJECTS: *English, Theatre Studies, Physics etc.*

Capital letters are NOT used for the following nouns related to school life:

Nouns to do with academic institutions and disciplines do not have capital letters when they are used in a general, unspecific way:

course, university - *I am looking forward to university life*

BUT - *I visited Glasgow University*

mathematical, historical, medical etc. - *I enjoy historical documentaries*

BUT - *I am a member of the Historical Association*

medicine, physics, science - *I have always been fascinated by scientific matters*

BUT

- *I want to pursue my interest in Science at degree level*

Use of colons

Use a colon to introduce lists of things: items in a series. The first sequence before a colon must be an independent clause or complete sentence. The following sentence is incorrect:

My favourite animals are: lions, tigers, and hippopotamuses.

This sentence is correct: *Bob sometimes catches small animals: birds, snakes, moles and mice.*

Use a colon to connect two independent clauses when the second enlarges on or explains the first.

The students had a great idea: they would set up their own newspaper.

Use of semicolons

The semicolon means to stop briefly; then go ahead. Complete sentences connected by semicolons should be closely related.

When angry, count four; when sleepy, count sheep.

When sentences are joined with a conjunction (and, but, or, for, nor, yet, so), use commas.

Use a semicolon (or full-stop) before these adverbs: *accordingly, besides, consequently, furthermore, hence, however, indeed, instead, likewise, meanwhile, moreover, nevertheless, nonetheless, otherwise, then, therefore, thus, too.*

Compare these two sentences; both are correct:

The protestors have a valid point; however, I don't agree with their use of violence.

The protestors have a valid point, but I don't agree with their use of violence.

Completing UCAS Application

Registration

1. [Click here](#) and select 'Register'.
2. Follow the instructions.
3. **Accept** terms and conditions, once you have read them, continue.
4. Enter your personal details as requested. If you make a mistake click 'previous'.
5. Use your **richardchalloner.com email address** - you will not be able to verify others at school.
6. Choose a **password** and answer the **FOUR security questions**. Make a note of these.
7. The first part of registration is complete and you are given a **username**. Make a note of it.
8. Select **I am applying through my school or college**
9. Type in the '**Buzzword**' given to you by your mentor; then follow the instructions.
10. Choose your mentor's name from the drop down box.
11. At this point you are given a **PERSONAL ID**. Again - make a note of it and keep it safe.
12. To proceed further, you need to enter a **verification code** sent to you by email. Once entered, you can continue to the rest of the application.

It is vital that you make a careful note of your **password, the answers to the security questions** and **username** and your **personal ID number**.

Logging on

Each time you log in to UCAS Apply, you will need to enter your **username**, and **password**. You can log on to **Apply** anywhere you have access to the web.

Please note

- a) If you have attempted to log on unsuccessfully several times, your account will be locked. Only designated staff can unlock your account. Alternatively, wait and try to log in again later.
- b) If you have accidentally shut down the browser rather than using **log out**, your account will be locked. If you attempt to log back in again, you will be presented with the following messages, 'You are already logged in. Please ensure this is your only active session.' Click **log in** if you wish to proceed. By clicking on **log in**, this will automatically allow you back into your account.
- c) After an hour of inactivity, **Apply** will time out for security reasons.
- d) If you have forgotten or lost your password, click the lost password link on the log in page. By entering your name, date of birth and the answer to your security question, you will be shown your log in details on screen.
- e) Only a designated member of staff can change your password or security question.
- f) If you forget or lose your username, you have no access into your application. You will need to contact UCAS technical support (see webpage).

Completing the Education Section of Apply

Richard Challoner School Centre Number: 14423 FULL TIME

Start: Internal students: 09/2013

External students: 09/2018

End: 08/2020

GCSEs

In order to enter all your GCSEs correctly, it is essential you check each result, the exam board for each subject, and the date the qualification was taken. You can do this either by downloading your statement of results from Progresso, or by referring to your certificates.

GCE/ BTEC Qualifications

Enter each A level or BTEC qualification you are currently studying for. Again, check that you enter the exam board and specification correctly for each. The date of completion you can enter as 08/19. For the grade of each of these, enter 'Pending'.

For those of you studying a subject/s at Holy Cross School:

Holy Cross School Centre Number: 14411

Enter 'Part time'

Start: **09/2018**

End: **08/2020**

N.B. You are legally obliged to enter the results of all qualifications which are certificated.

Points to remember

1. The UCAS application consists of the following seven sections:
Personal details **Additional Information** **Student Finance** **Choices**
Education **Statement** **Employment**
2. Click on the section name in the UCAS Apply main screen and follow the on screen instructions carefully.
3. You can leave a section partially completed and return to it later. Make sure you save any changes as you make them. The status of sections is shown in the main screen as **not started**, **in progress** or **complete**.
4. After completing a section you will need to select **section finished?** to change the status of the section to **completed**. Any inaccurate or compulsory data left out will be highlighted in red to indicate it needs completing.
5. Most of the application is self-explanatory. However, take careful note of the information given below.
6. At all times, take care of **spelling** and **punctuation**.

Choices

1. Enter the **Course** and **Institution** details of your chosen institutions by clicking on the appropriate ? box and selecting from the pop-up list.
2. Ignore the **Campus Code** box unless you know your chosen course requires one.
3. Tick the **Home** box if you will be living at home during your course.
4. Tick the **Defer** box if you are taking a gap year.
5. Leave the **Point of Entry** box blank.

Personal Details

Most of this section is self-explanatory. Take careful note of the following:

1. **Student support** Select **02 LEA**. Then click on **LEA Selection** to choose the name of your Local Education Authority (e.g. Kingston, Sutton, Wandsworth)
2. **Occupational background** - This is your parent or guardian not you.

Education

Following the instructions given, enter:

1. All your GCSE subjects and results. Select **GCSE**.
2. Details of the A Level/ BTEC subjects you are doing.
3. Attendance at campus days, taster courses and summer schools can be recorded in the **Summer School** section.

Statement

1. **You may only enter your personal statement on to your application once it has been approved by your referee (your mentor).**
2. Do not type it directly online, but do word process it.
3. When your referee is happy with your personal statement, 'copy and paste' it into the relevant section of your application.
 - a. If you haven't finished inputting the statement, but need to stop, click **save**.
 - b. To check the length of what you have typed so far, click **preview**.
 - c. When you have finished your statement and checked it is within the maximum number of lines (47 lines, 4000 characters total – about 600 words in 12pt Times New Roman), then click, **section finished?**

Checking the status of your application

1. At any stage you can **view all**, to preview or print a copy of your application to date, in a user-friendly format. Uncompleted sections are highlighted in red.
2. Once you have completed and sent your application to the staff section, you can still **view all**, even though no changes can be made.

Sending your application to your referee

1. Once all sections are complete you can select **send**.
2. At this stage you need to agree to the UCAS declarations. The **I agree** declarations will legally bind you to pay your application fee of £24.
3. Payments should be made by credit or debit card only.

Once your application is with your referee

1. Once you have sent your application to your referee, they will check your details and add the school reference.
2. Information about the progress of your application will be displayed when you log on. The stages go from: *Application not checked* to *Application sent to UCAS*

After applying

Once the form is at UCAS

Once your application has been sent to UCAS, an AS2 Acknowledgement letter/ email will be sent by post, giving you a **UCAS Track password** for the applicant enquiry service **Track** on the UCAS website. Make a careful note of it! You will need it to track the progress of your application.

Offers

Universities make offers through the winter and spring terms. Be ready for some frustrating periods when nothing seems to be happening, since some institutions take longer than others to process applications.

UCAS will inform you by letter/ email as soon as an institution makes you an offer. By logging on to **Track** at www.ucas.com, you will see whether the college or university is offering you a place, and if so, on what terms.

Types of Offers

An offer may be either unconditional or conditional, and will tell you the year & month that your course starts, and the point of entry (in most cases, this is 1st year).

An **UNCONDITIONAL OFFER (U)** means that you have met all the entrance requirements and the university or college is happy to have you on the course. The college or university will contact you if they need proof of your qualifications. However, the offer may specify requirements, such as financial or medical conditions, that you must meet before you can join the course.

A **CONDITIONAL OFFER (C)** means that the university or college has made you an offer that depends on certain conditions: you must get certain grades/points overall.

You must meet the conditions of your offer by 31 August even if your offer is for deferred entry.

ACCEPTING & REJECTING OFFERS

Once you have received decisions from **all** your choices, UCAS will send you a *Replying to Offers* letter or email. You now have to decide to hold on to two offers.

You must reply to each offer in one of the following ways.

- Firm acceptance (F). (You will definitely accept the place if you get the grades)
- Insurance acceptance (I). (If you don't get your Firm, you will accept this offer)
- Decline (D)

Here are the possible combinations of decisions you will be left with:

CF Firmly accepted **C**onditional offer

CF + CI Firmly accepted **C**onditional offer plus a **C**onditional offer that you have accepted as an **I**nsurance

CF + UI Firmly accepted **C**onditional offer plus an **U**nconditional offer that you have accepted as an **I**nsurance

UF Firmly accepted **U**nconditional offer. You cannot have an **I**nsurance choice.

Do seek advice from appropriate people at this point. You should think carefully before you decide which offers to accept because once you accept an offer, including an insurance offer, **you are bound contractually to that course**. You should be happy that both the course and the college or university are right for you, because you will be spending the next three or four years there. There may still be time to attend open day(s) or visit the university or college before you make your decision.

You can reply to the offers using Track at www.ucas.com, or by phoning the **Customer Service Unit** on **0870 1122211**.

WHEN TO REPLY

You should send your reply as soon as possible after you receive your *Replying to Offers* letter. UCAS must receive your reply at the very latest by the date printed on the letter.

If you do not reply by the deadline date, your offers will be withdrawn.

The earliest reply date will probably be in early May. However, the date on the letter is your individual reply date; it may be different from other people's reply dates.

If you achieve better results than you expected, it will be possible, for a short time in August, to look at an alternative course that still has spaces available, while still holding your Firm choice.

If you change your mind after accepting an offer, you can still withdraw, but you will not be able to apply for other courses or go through Clearing in the same year. However, you can apply again in the next application cycle.

INTERVIEWS

Not all students get asked to attend interviews. Some departments organise Open Days specifically for students who have applied to them. Although they are not formal interviews, if you make a good impression it can help decide whether you are offered a place, or how low an offer you receive. A lot of the following advice can help for both formal and informal interview situations.

Interview Preparation

- Know why you want to study that course.
- Know why you want to study at that university.
- Use prospectuses and websites to find tips and commonly asked questions in your subject field.
- Do some background reading about the course.
- Think through what you can say about relevant topics from the courses you are currently studying.
- Prepare carefully to talk about any related experience you have: the skills you were introduced to, the things you liked and the things you learned.
- For courses that lead to a profession, you need to be able to speak knowledgeably about your interest in that career.
- Check your personal statement and be prepared to respond in detail to questions about what you have written.
- Think about how you are going to get there - you don't want to be late.

What are interviewers looking for?

- They want evidence that you will be a committed and enthusiastic student - who will cope with the work and survive the length of the course.
- Someone who shows that they can present their ideas and arguments well.
- That when you are a student you won't need spoon feeding and that you will enjoy working independently.
- That you are enthusiastic about the subject.

Tips for the Interview itself

- Try and find out how formal the interview will be and dress appropriately.
- Remember that most people are nervous before interviews - bear in mind that you wouldn't have been invited if the university wasn't interested in you.
- Allow yourself thinking time before answering difficult questions.
- Remember that problem-solving questions require you to consider an issue from different points of view, as well as arriving at a personal opinion or preferred course of action.
- Speak clearly and try to answer every question.
- Don't pretend to be anything you are not.
- Be prepared – you shouldn't learn your answers to likely questions 'parrot-fashion' but you should plan out your answers to the most important questions in writing; note-form is best.
- Be enthusiastic!
- Have some questions that you want to ask them - these may be about aspects of the course that particularly interest you and you want more information about. (Don't ask questions to which you could easily have found out the information via their website though!)

UCAS EXTRA

If you find yourself without an offer, for whatever reason, and you have used all five choices already, **ucasextra** enables you to have an additional choice through UCAS. This means you do not have to wait until Clearing to continue to find a place.

The **ucasextra** procedure operates from mid-March to the end of June/ beginning of July. Universities and colleges with vacancies will list them on the UCAS website.

Applicants who are eligible will be able to refer themselves electronically via **ucastrack** for courses with vacancies.

The courses available through **ucasextra** will be highlighted on the **ucascourse** service on our website. Or you can contact universities and colleges direct.

Who is eligible?

You will be eligible for Extra if:

- you have used all five of your choices; and
- you have had unsuccessful or withdrawal decisions for all your choices; or
- you have cancelled your outstanding choices and hold no offers; or
- you have received replies back from all five choices and have declined all offers made to you.

How does it work?

If you are made an offer, you can then choose whether or not to accept it. If you decide to accept a conditional offer, you will not be able to take any further part in Extra.

If you decline an offer or the university or college turns you down, you will be given another opportunity to use **ucasextra**, time permitting. If you have been using **ucastrack**, your **ucasextra** button will be re-activated. Once you have accepted an offer in **ucasextra**, you are committed to it in the same way as you would be with an offer through the main UCAS system. If you are unsuccessful, decline an offer, or do not receive an offer within 15 days of choosing a course through Extra, you can make a further application.

CLEARING

Clearing is a UCAS service for people who have not been successful in getting the grades required for their first and second choice institutions. You are eligible for Clearing if:

- you have not withdrawn from the UCAS scheme
- you hold no offers
- your offers have not been confirmed because you have not met the conditions (such as not achieving the required grades)
- you declined your offers
- you have applied after 30 June (12 June for Route B art and design courses)

If you are eligible, UCAS will automatically indicate this when you log in to Apply.

How does it work?

Lists of courses with vacancies will be published from the middle of August until late September in **The Independent**, **The Independent on Sunday** and **The Mirror**, as well as on the UCAS website. Check the lists for courses that interest you and then contact the university or college to ask if it will accept you. It is a good idea to do this yourself because the admissions tutor will want to speak to you personally, not a parent or teacher. If you accept a place through Clearing, you will be sent a letter of Confirmation automatically.

Deadline Dates 2019-2020

The dates below have been internally set in order to allow for the time consuming processes of checking applications, adding references, approving references and sending to UCAS in time to meet the UCAS deadlines (of 15th October for early applications and 15th January for other applications). They MUST be adhered to.

| | |
|---|---|
| Tuesday 21st May | Deadline for 75% planning sheet to be submitted to your mentor |
| Friday 24th May | Deadline for 25% planning sheet to be submitted to your mentor |
| Thursday 4th July | First draft of your personal statement to be submitted to your Mentor for feedback before the end of term |
| Friday 30th August (or earlier) | Second (much improved) draft of Personal Statement to be submitted for further feedback from Mentor |
| Date to be agreed with Mentor | Third draft of Personal Statement (final chance for feedback) to be submitted to Mentor |
| Tuesday 24th September | All Oxbridge/ Medicine/ Veterinary Science/ Dentistry applications to have been completed and 'sent' |
| Tuesday 15th October | All UCAS applications to have been completed and 'sent' |

KEY DATE: A LEVEL RESULTS DAY 2020: THURSDAY 13TH AUGUST – MAKE SURE YOU ARE AT HOME!