



A SIMPLE GUIDE TO APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY

Do the research

- Start researching courses and universities as EARLY as possible in Year 12. It's free to initially register at www.ucas.com and the sooner you find out about the different courses available to you, the sooner you can stream-line your options and plan ahead to find out more about them.
- You will need to select **a total of FIVE university places/courses**. Ideally, this should include two 'aspirational' choices (university courses that require top grades), two 'middling' choices (grades you know you will achieve) and one 'back up' choice. (just in case things don't quite work out the way you had hoped on exam results day)
- Check out www.opendays.com early on, so that you can plan any visits in advance.
- **DO actually attend Open Days**. We will allow you time off school to do this. Don't just rely on a university's reputation. You can only get a real feel for somewhere when you are actually *there*, talking to staff and students, walking around the campus and asking lots of questions.
- If possible, **get a parent/carer to accompany you to OPEN DAYS**. Believe it or not, it can really help in your decision making process, as they will pick up on things that you wouldn't necessarily be focusing on at the time. Universities like to provide special talks to prospective parents about the network systems that are in place to help students. This means that if you ever do need help, advice or assistance, your parents will also be aware of who best to turn to at your university.

Prepare your Personal Statement

- Think about which member of staff you would like to have as your **Personal Tutor** to help you with your UCAS application and Personal Statement. Your Personal Tutor will also be responsible for writing the student reference for your application, which will include your predicted grades. Speak to your Personal Tutor sooner rather than later to confirm they are available, as other students may get to them before you!
- **Start writing your Personal Statement as EARLY as possible**. The end of Year 12 is the perfect time to do this. Use the guides provided by the school, which will tell you what you need to include. Also look online for sample versions to provide inspiration. However, **DON'T COPY THEM**. Universities have software to identify plagiarism! It's easy to get stuck on producing a 'knock them dead opening paragraph'. If you find it tricky, move on to another paragraph. It doesn't matter what order you produce your final statement, as long as it gets done. A great opening paragraph can be the last thing you write and add to it!

Adhere to the school UCAS deadline date

- The UCAS Applications process formally opens on 5 September of each year and ends on the following date of 15 January. HOWEVER, the Southborough Sixth Form deadline for submitting your completed UCAS application is **ALWAYS BEFORE WE BREAK UP FOR THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS**. (usually around 15 December). This is generally later than many other educational institutions.
- It will cost you **£24, payable online**, to send off your UCAS application, so make sure you have access to a debit or credit card.
- Once sent, your UCAS application will automatically 'bounce back' to the school, where it will be checked and then approved. The application will then be sent to the universities of your choice.
- If you want to apply to **Oxbridge, medical or veterinary school**, you need to complete your UCAS application early - by 15 October. In addition, you will need to take an online aptitude test before you submit your application – either a **UK CAT** or **BMAT**. These tests need to be booked and paid for by the student (usually during the summer holidays before a student returns to Year 13) and they take place at a designated test centre. There is a test centre in Kingston that you may wish to use. A student will find out whether their applications have been successful or not by 15 January.
- Universities may wish to invite you for an **interview** with them, some won't. If you do get an invitation, do your homework and arrive prepared! Think about the kind of questions that they may ask you about your chosen subject.

Accepting your offers

- The **deadline for accepting university offers is 2 May**. You will need to make a decision on your firm and insurance choice if all your universities responded by 31 March deadline. If UCAS do not receive your responses, they will **DECLINE OFFERS ON YOUR BEHALF!**
- You can accept a **maximum of two choices** – one firm and one insurance. You can only have an insurance choice if your firm choice is a conditional offer. If you accept an unconditional offer as your firm choice then the place is guaranteed, so you cannot have an insurance choice.
- Remember that your **'firm'** is your **first choice** – the place that you most want to go to. If you accept a conditional offer and meet conditions, you'll have a confirmed place here.
- Your **'insurance'** is the choice you'd want if you didn't meet the conditions of your firm choice. If this is a conditional offer, you'd need to meet the conditions for your place to be confirmed

University Accommodation

On your UCAS application form, you will be given the opportunity to show whether you will require **accommodation** or not at university by ticking a box. Once you have ticked this box, your chosen universities will normally contact you directly via email to provide links to information on what accommodation is available. The help and support provided with this can vary considerably from university to university. The key is for you to be **PRO-ACTIVE** and **PROMPT** in your research. Often the best – and most cost effective -- accommodation goes extremely quickly. As the old saying goes, ‘the early bird catches the worm’.

Paying for University

- As part of your UCAS application, you will be given the chance to formally apply for a **STUDENT LOAN**. This will cover the cost of the university fees (tuition fees) and contribute towards a student’s living costs (maintenance loan). You will be asked to set up a student finance online account, log in and complete the application. Please note that you may need to include your household income, if applying for a maintenance loan. A parent /carer will be asked to confirm these details. You may also be asked to send in proof of identity.
- For reference, **tuition fees will automatically be paid/sent straight to the university**. It is not given to the student to then ‘pass it on’! The **maintenance loan**, however, **will be paid directly to bank account of the student, in three instalments over the academic year**. Living costs can be high and the maintenance loan may not cover every expense. Household income may also affect the total amount of maintenance loan that a student is eligible for. It’s important for students and parents/carers to discuss this early on to avoid unnecessary financial hardship. Whilst you may not find this fact down in writing, **The Student Loan Company** will **make an assumption** that parent/carers **will actively contribute financially** in some way towards their child’s living costs whilst at university.
- The deadline date for completing your **Student Finance application** is at the end of May (usually 25 May). They will usually send you a reminder via email but please don’t rely on this. Failure to meet this deadline may result in **delayed** payment of tuition and maintenance loans. Not having the money to pay for your accommodation, food, books and other resources when you first start university can be extremely stressful and may jeopardise your place at university.

When you’ll hear that you’ve got your conditional place

- Universities receive your exam results before you do! That’s why many students will find an acceptance / rejection email from their firm and or conditional choice in the early hours of A level results day. They won’t tell you what results you got, but you’ll be able to guess whether things have gone your way from whether they confirm your place with them or not. If they do confirm, CONGRATULATIONS! If not, it’s certainly not the end of the world, as there is always **clearing**.

Clearing

- **Clearing** is a part of the UCAS **university** application **process**. It is a way for **universities** to fill any spaces they have left for the new academic year. It gives applicants who do not hold an offer another chance of finding a **university** place. If you want to go to university but don't have an offer – or you've missed the offers you did have – make no mistake. There are lots of places out there for the taking!

Check out the link to find out more:

<https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/university/apply/clearing/guide-to-clearing>

Make sure you know what to do BEFORE results day. Forewarned is forearmed.

**Universities offer lots of emotional, social and financial support to students.
Find out all about it BEFORE you get there!**

- Get to know your preferred universities inside out. Contact them when you can to find out about the **resources, opportunities, facilities and support it can offer students**. This may include: **WELL-BEING** (GP, counsellors, mental health advisors,), **social clubs, grants, bursaries and much more**.
- **Last but not least, before you go to university, get your meningitis vaccination!**