



Kidbrooke Park Road
London SE3 9PX

t: 020 8856 0115
f: 020 8331 3004
www.thomastallis.org.uk

Head: Carolyn Roberts
e: headteacher@thomastallis.org.uk

05 February 2024

Supporting students in applying to highly competitive universities

Dear parents/carers,

At Tallis we are committed to supporting as many students as possible in making applications to the most competitive universities, such as Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial, or for the most competitive courses such as medicine and dentistry.

It is generally a prerequisite for such an application to have an average GCSE point score of 7 or higher and the great majority of successful applicants have one that is much stronger still. The typical A-level outcome for successful applicants is AAA or better. Applicants must also successfully pass an extremely challenging interview process and to be called to interview must perform very strongly in additional testing that is much more difficult than A-levels themselves are.

We are writing to you so that you and your Year 12 child understand the very considerable extra work that is required to make an application to elite institutions in the UK. The selection process is such a lengthy and challenging one that students must diligently prepare over a long period if they are to have any hope of being made an offer of a place. Hence the school can only support such applications if it is clear that an applicant is willing to put in the work required and is likely to achieve the entry grades needed. That work must start now.

The tailored programme of support and guidance described below is open to all students in the first instance, but whether we can support students in making applications in Year 13 will be dependent on engagement with the programme, as well as our professional assessment of whether they are likely to meet the entry requirements of the course they hope to apply for.

The early applicant deadline for Oxbridge and medicine/dentistry/veterinary applications is October 15 each year. The additional entry testing (if required) is generally sat at the end of October.

Programme of support for early applicants

- Our Advanced Skills Teacher for Science, Mr Smythe has been running sessions to support potential **science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and computer science applicants, after-school on Tuesdays**, focusing initially on developing their scientific and mathematical thinking skills, before moving on in the summer term to bespoke entrance test practice.
- Students who wish to study medicine/dentistry/veterinary science must inform Dr Pinkerton, Mr Smythe and Ms McGowan of their aspirations. They will need to arrange their own work experience, and medical applicants will need to arrange to sit the UCAT at an external centre and practice past papers independently over an extended period of time. The school has links with a group of GPs who are very generous with offering their time to support our applicants, and we will share as much relevant information as possible with potential applicants. We will also help with preparing applications and arranging practice interviews in Year 13.
- A meeting will be held at **3.25pm on Thursday 8 February, in room 1620**, to which all Year 12 students have been invited by email, in Assembly and in tutor groups. We will require certain students to attend based on their GCSE average points score and/or current teacher recommendations. At this meeting, the Sixth Form team will explain what is required of students

inquisitive • collaborative • persistent • disciplined • imaginative

who hope to make a highly ambitious university application, and introduce our programme of support. We will invite students who have already been attending the support sessions currently provided, as well as students we think may be capable of making such applications based on their GCSE average points score and/or current teacher recommendations. The session will also be open to all other students in the year group, and advertised by email, in Assembly and in tutor groups.

- Our Progression Officer Dr Pinkerton will begin running 'Thinking Aloud' sessions after the February half-term, to support potential **arts, humanities and social science applicants after-school every Week B Thursday, 3.20pm room TBC**, focusing on developing the thinking and talking skills needed to excel in a competitive university interview. **Potential medicine/dentistry/veterinary applicants are also required to attend these sessions** as they will develop the skills needed to excel in interviews for these subjects.
- Once a cohort of students is identified, based on those who wish to make competitive applications and, in our professional opinion, who have the potential to meet the entry requirements for their chosen course, the STEM and Thinking Aloud after-school sessions will become timetabled 'Period 7' lessons. Attendance will be recorded, and the school will be unable to support students who do not attend to make applications to highly selective universities.
- As well as Mr Smythe's support for STEM entrance tests, support will be provided in the summer term for students interested in courses requiring the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) or the Law National Aptitude Test (LNAT).
- Students who have been regularly attending sessions will be asked to sit a mock in their appropriate entrance test in late June, just after the public examinations end. These students will then have a progress review meeting with a member of the Sixth Form, to discuss feedback from the mock exam.
- Where no entrance exam is required, students will have a mini-interview to gauge levels of interest and motivation.
- Medical applicants must do an entrance exam and a highly competitive interview: potential applicants will therefore do both a mock entrance exam and a mini-interview.
- **If a student's mock exam and/or interview performance means we cannot envision them performing strongly in the real exam in the autumn, and/or if they cannot show evidence of the requisite levels of motivation and commitment, then the school will be unable to support them.**
- Where students do perform strongly enough, or when we judge they have the potential to perform strongly with more application, we will work out a plan for focused work over the summer.
- Students will then be supported through the rest of the application process at the start of Year 13.

This programme represents a high level of commitment by our staff, guided by our strong belief in ensuring all students can make as competitive a university application as possible, but the students we support must in turn demonstrate that they have the commitment and motivation to make a competitive application.

Please discuss this with your child if you believe they plan to make a competitive university application. If they are interested, they must understand and commit to what is required.

Many thanks for your continuing support!

Yours sincerely,

The Tallis UCAS Team