

# UCAS

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The university application system explained

# 2016 Deadline Dates

- Deadline for first draft of Personal Statement – Wednesday 13th July
- Oxbridge/Medical UCAS deadline – 15th October
- General UCAS deadline – Friday 11th December

# Destinations 2016

- 175 students were placed, the majority at their first and nearly everyone at their second choice
- 51 students are off to Russell Group institutions including Cambridge, Exeter and UCL – for a totally comprehensive school, this is remarkable\*
- Over 100 are off to UK top 10 or other prestigious specialist institutions such as SOAS, UAL and Bath

\*Only 23% of students did not hold an offer from an RG or other top 10/ prestigious specialist institution. In many cases this was due to their choice of course, which was simply not offered at these universities

# So, the bottom line is...

- Unlike many other schools, we have a dedicated Ucas team and offer a bespoke service
- This involves one-to-one meetings (in some cases, over many hours!) to ensure each aspect of the student's application is as good as it can be
- We encourage students to be aspirational in their choices (within reason!), and all our students will be supported to progress to the very best institutions in the country
- This is therefore usually a fairly complicated and lengthy process. We do not allow applications to go off until they are as good as they can possibly be
- This can sometimes be frustrating for the students... but they need to be aware that this is in their interests!

# Why go to uni?

- Well, for a start, it is still true that graduates earn more at age 21 and throughout their lives than non-graduates
- Starting salaries are highest for graduates in medicine, dentistry and engineering, but a degree is a good way of boosting your earning potential whatever subject you choose

# But it's not all about cash...

*Graduates reap many other benefits over the course of their lifetime:*

- For example, they are not only likely to be better paid but less depressed, healthier and happier than non-graduates
- They are less likely to smoke or be obese and more likely to be involved with their local communities
- For all these reasons they cost society less, and enjoy life more

# Which course?

- Many students enjoy academic subjects such as history, but are worried that studying them at uni will be pointless as it won't set them up for a particular career
- In fact, one of the best ways you can set yourself up as attractive to an employer is to get the best degree you can from the best university, regardless of the subject
- A lot of people think that graduates in “soft” disciplines are unemployable, but that is not necessarily true...
- in fact, graduates in drama, sociology and media studies, for example, may be among the most employable in the country, because of the skills they will have developed through their course...

# What are employers interested in?

- Many graduate employers are not after knowledge or skills in a particular discipline – what they are looking for are skills like team-working, communication and negotiation
- They want an individual who can research and present an argument, who can act decisively, but who is adaptable and flexible. They want clever and motivated young people who are confident and self-aware
- All these are skills that can be learnt on any degree course, regardless of the particular discipline involved

# So, which course at which uni?

- We all know the unis that regularly come top of all the league tables, but which institutions are best for which subject?
- Looking at the lists on your table, match the course with the best place to study it

## Which course at which uni? Can you match the course to the best place to study it in the UK?

Dance

Law

Brewing Studies

American Studies

Interpreting and Deaf Studies

Politics, Philosophy and Economics

Creative Writing

Digital Media Practice

History of Art

Hospitality, Events and Tourism

Social Work

Accounting and Finance

Architecture

Fashion

Film Studies

Swansea

Loughborough

Birmingham

Wolverhampton

Falmouth

Bournemouth

Oxford

The Courtauld Institute

Surrey

Strathclyde

Cambridge

Southampton

Heriot-Watt

Bath

UEA

# The Ucas form: its contents

- is completed entirely online, and consists of 5 parts
  - Tallis registered every Year 12 who came to Progression Week in June
1. Personal details
  2. Education – details of all qualifications already taken and to be taken
  3. Choices – the five courses you are applying for
  4. The Personal Statement – where you get to sell yourself to your chosen unis
  5. The Reference – written by tutors/Ucas staff – includes your predicted grades

# Personal details and Education

- These sections should have been filled in already
- If not they need to be filled in asap
- Your child will need to sit down with their exam certificates and fill in the details.
  
- We cannot complete these two sections for your child, and we will not meet with them to discuss their application unless they have been filled in.
- Of course, we will help if someone gets stuck filling them in.

# Choices

- Students need to research a range of courses which correspond roughly to their predicted grades
- They should include aspirational choices (at the very top of what the student can expect to achieve, if they work really hard), what is realistic (if things go reasonably well) and an insurance (if things go badly!)
- When we meet with the student, we will discuss these choices and decide on the final five, taking into account all the information we have
- They can then input their choices into the relevant section of the form

# The Reference

- The reference is usually completed by the student's tutor, using academic references written by their subject teachers
- On the UCAS reference page, we also enter a student's predicted grades.
- These are established in discussion with your child's teachers.
- They are aspirational, but fair-minded.
- No student in 2015-2016 exceeded their Predicted Grades!

# The Personal Statement...

Together with their prior and predicted qualifications, and the School Reference, and in some cases additional tests, this is used by admissions tutors to decide whether to make an offer to applicants

For popular courses at competitive universities, students will be competing against thousands of others with the same predictions

It is therefore probably the most important piece of writing the student has ever written!

# So, what advice do we give students?

- Why have you chosen to study a particular subject/course – what drives/ fascinates/inspires you about your chosen discipline? Be specific and detailed about *why* it is the course for you
- What attempts have you made to explore your interest outside the classroom/curriculum? Think about: reading you have done, courses attended, research, summer schools: anything that shows a real interest in the subject, beyond your A level or BTEC course.
- What has interested you in your sixth form studies? Again, be *specific* and *detailed* about this – give examples of particular modules or ideas/concepts/theories which have inspired you, details of individual coursework studies or independent research you have done
- Any relevant work experience or placements, or voluntary work you have undertaken: make sure you explain *what you learnt* from any work experience, or what skills you have developed
- Any extra-curricular activities you are involved in within school such as the sixth form committee, SEN mentoring, Fair Trade, etc. Again, what did you learn? What skills did you develop?
- Any other achievements such as: Duke of Edinburgh, Millennium Volunteers, young Enterprise etc
- If you are planning to defer your place, make sure you explain your reasons for doing so and your plans for the year
- Your sports, social and leisure interests

# Relevant, specific, detailed...

- For academic courses, universities usually recommend that at least 70% of the statement should be focused on the student's academic interest in the subject at A level, and research/reading they have done outside school
- However, for most academic courses, and certainly those at the most competitive universities, admissions tutors are only really interested in the academic stuff – so any mention of extra-curricular activities needs to link them closely to their academic studies in terms of relevant skills developed
- For vocational courses such as medicine, nursing, teaching etc, there needs to be more emphasis on the reasons behind their career choice, and relevant voluntary experience