

# **Applying to Higher Education**



## **Guide for Parents**

## **UCAS**

Applications for higher education courses are made through the UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) system.

Students can apply for up to five courses, although potential Doctors, Dentists and Vets are limited to four specialist choices (the other one can be for other subjects or just left blank). Universities do not see the student's other university choices.

All applications are made on-line through UCAS Apply. Students pay the **£23** fee online with a credit or debit card, the College adds the reference and sends it to UCAS, where it is processed and sent to each university applied to.

Responses could include offers of a place, interviews or rejections. UCAS will confirm all offers and students are asked to choose two: a firm choice and an insurance choice. On results day, if students have the grades for their first choice, they go there; if not, they go to their second choice university (their insurance choice). If they have missed the grades completely they can enter Clearing.

### **What makes a good application?**

All universities and departments have differing entry requirements: your son/daughter must make sure they meet them. These might be specific predicted grades, e.g. BBB or UCAS points e.g. 300 (see attached UCAS tariff). Some courses ask for relevant experience, a particular combination of subjects and in some cases, specific GCSE requirements – prospectuses & websites provide details.

Entry requirements listed by universities on UCAS are advisory and the actual offer a student receives may vary, taking into account the individual's application.

The right level of academic ability is essential: students should only apply for courses they can get the grades for. The predicted grades given by their teachers that are entered on their UCAS application are based on their AS grades.

### **The Personal Statement**

Only 47 lines long, this is the difficult bit, as applicants must really market themselves – many drafts are often needed. Universities want to know why they have applied for that course. Have they researched it properly? Do they know what it involves?

They look for evidence that the student enjoys studying, can manage their time effectively and will be mature enough to cope with the freedom of university life.

Part-time jobs, voluntary work, involvement with clubs, sports and other extra-curricular activities should be mentioned. The student should try to reflect on the skills and personal qualities they have gained from this.

For some courses relevant work experience is essential and should be mentioned in the personal statement, analysing what they have gained from it.

As a general rule 70% of the personal statement should focus on the applicant's academic interests and abilities and 30% on their extra-curricular activities and achievements.

## Choosing the right course and university

With nearly 50,000 courses at more than 300 universities and colleges the choice can be overwhelming! There are also specialist colleges in art, drama and music. With tuition fees and student loans making dropping-out an expensive option, helping your son or daughter to make the right choice is vital. Encourage them to consider the factors outlined below, by carrying out research and thinking about what would suit them:

- Course content – check prospectuses & websites
- Entry requirements – check on *www.ucas.com*, click on 'course search' 'entry requirements' then 'English qualifications'. Do entry requirements match their predicted A2 grades and GCSE profile?
- Teaching & assessment methods – Do they suit the student's learning style?
- Location – distance from home, travel costs
- Layout – city centre, campus, large or small?
- Accommodation – cost, catered or self-catering, guaranteed in 1st year?
- League tables – they are useful but can be based on universities as a whole or on individual subjects and data can sometimes be out-of-date
- Financial help – check the bursaries & scholarships available at each university using the Student Finance Calculator at [www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance)

## Important deadline dates

College deadlines are set deliberately early to ensure that we have ample time to approve applications and to prepare, attach and send the references to UCAS. Due to the large number of applications that we receive in a short space of time, it can take up to 14 working days for the application to be checked, the reference written and attached and it to be sent to UCAS. It is normal for the College to process over 300 applications. Students are advised to meet our college deadlines in order to ensure that their application reaches UCAS before Christmas. Students applying for competitive courses are advised to apply as early as possible.

Friday 13th September	Oxbridge, Medicine, Veterinary Science & Dentistry
Friday 20th September	High demand subjects i.e. Law, Psychology
Friday 11th October	Latest advisable date for handing in forms
Friday 8th November	Final College deadline

## **How Coulsdon College helps students with applications**

Ongoing                      Within the Tutorial Programme students have started to assess whether Higher Education is right for them. Students have been encouraged to use [www.ukcoursefinder.co.uk](http://www.ukcoursefinder.co.uk) to start their research.

Students are encouraged to use the resources in the Careers Room, where our careers staff will be on hand to help answer any questions they may have.

6th March                      Lower Sixth Get Ahead Day

*Students will have the opportunity to explore their options after College.*

9th June                        All students attend HE & Careers Day at Coulsdon College

June                              Higher Education Sessions

*All students will attend a session where they will start the first draft of their Personal Statement and register on the UCAS application system.*

September                      Complete UCAS application online

*Form is then checked, references are added and applications are forwarded to UCAS.*

March/April 2014              Make final university decision

## **How parents can help**

Go to the parent section of [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) which has been developed to help parents find all the information they need to support their children in choosing their courses and applying to higher education.

In the University and Higher Education section of [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) you will find a parents' page, which contains many useful resources.

Take an interest in your son/daughter's application. Encourage careful research over the next few months and during the summer holidays.

Go with them to open days ([www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com) lists all university open days).

Read through their personal statement & form to help them check spelling, grammar and so on.

Check they meet college deadline dates (listed on Page 2 of this booklet)

## UCAS tariff 2013

Points	GCE A Level	GCE AS Level	BTEC L3 Diploma	BTEC L3 Subsidiary Diploma	BTEC L3 Certificate
280			D*D*		
260			D*D		
240			DD		
220					
200			DM		
180					
160			MM		
140	A*			D*	
120	A		MP	D	
110					
100	B				
90					
80	C		PP	M	
70					D*
60	D	A			D
50		B			
40	E	C		P	M
30		D			
20		E			P

## Useful websites

### Universities

<a href="http://www.ucas.com">www.ucas.com</a>	Advice on applications and a course-search facility
<a href="http://www.whatuni.com">www.whatuni.com</a>	Student reviews of universities and courses  <i>Includes a search engine to search for courses by predicted grades and tariff points.</i>
<a href="http://unistats.direct.gov.uk">http://unistats.direct.gov.uk</a>	Compare subjects at universities & colleges
<a href="http://www.ukcoursefinder.com">www.ukcoursefinder.com</a>	Course research, university & college details
<a href="http://www.push.co.uk">www.push.co.uk</a>	An independent guide to choosing courses and universities
<a href="http://www.skill.org.uk">www.skill.org.uk</a>	National Bureau for students with disabilities
<a href="http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk">www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk</a>	Advice on Course Choice
<a href="http://www.opendays.com">www.opendays.com</a>	Lists all university open days

## **Student Finance**

<a href="http://www.direct.gov.uk">www.direct.gov.uk</a>	The 'Education & Learning' pages contain a wealth of information about Higher Education. There is a link to register & apply for student finance on-line via Student Finance England
<a href="http://www.slc.co.uk">www.slc.co.uk</a>	Student Loan Company – facts about finance with a link to Student Finance England
<a href="http://www.studentfinance.direct.gov.uk">www.studentfinance.direct.gov.uk</a>	Register and apply for student finance
<a href="http://www.scholarship-search.org.uk">www.scholarship-search.org.uk</a>	Helpful funding and budgeting advice
<a href="http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk">www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk</a>	The 'Students' section has information on NHS Bursaries for all eligible courses, including Social Work

## **Graduates**

<a href="http://www.prospects.ac.uk">www.prospects.ac.uk</a>	Excellent information on graduate employment and information on what jobs specific degrees lead to
<a href="http://www.agr.org.uk">www.agr.org.uk</a>	Association of Graduate Recruiters

## **Gap Year**

<a href="http://www.yearoutgroup.org">www.yearoutgroup.org</a>	Comprehensive information on gap years. All companies on this website adhere to a Code of Practice
<a href="http://www.arthistoryabroad.com">www.arthistoryabroad.com</a>	History of Art in Italy
<a href="http://www.aupairamerica.co.uk">www.aupairamerica.co.uk</a>	Au pairs in the USA
<a href="http://www.aventure.co.uk">www.aventure.co.uk</a>	Africa and Asia Venture
<a href="http://www.bunac.org">www.bunac.org</a>	Summer Camps Abroad
<a href="http://www.campamerica.co.uk">www.campamerica.co.uk</a>	US Summer Camps
<a href="http://www.cesalanguages.com">www.cesalanguages.com</a>	Study languages abroad
<a href="http://www.changingworlds.co.uk">www.changingworlds.co.uk</a>	Voluntary work overseas
<a href="http://www.ciee.org">www.ciee.org</a>	Council on International Education Exchanges
<a href="http://www.coralcay.org">www.coralcay.org</a>	Reef and rainforest conservation
<a href="http://www.frontier.ac.uk">www.frontier.ac.uk</a>	Conservation Projects
<a href="http://www.gapyear.co.uk">www.gapyear.co.uk</a>	Gap year information, links to lots of relevant sites

<a href="http://www.greenvolunteers.org">www.greenvolunteers.org</a>	Worldwide voluntary opportunities in conservation
<a href="http://www.lattitude.org.uk">www.lattitude.org.uk</a>	Gap Year Projects
<a href="http://www.projecttrust.org.uk">www.projecttrust.org.uk</a>	Project Trust Volunteers Overseas
<a href="http://www.raleighinternational.org">www.raleighinternational.org</a>	Raleigh International Expeditions
<a href="http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk">www.projects-abroad.co.uk</a>	Teaching Projects
<a href="http://www.travellersworldwide.com">www.travellersworldwide.com</a>	Worldwide opportunities for all ages
<a href="http://www.trekforce.org.uk">www.trekforce.org.uk</a>	Expeditions in Central America, SE Asia and Africa
<a href="http://www.worldwidevolunteering.org.uk">www.worldwidevolunteering.org.uk</a>	Community & Environmental work UK & abroad
<a href="http://www.yini.org.uk">www.yini.org.uk</a>	Information about Year in Industry placements