



**Malmesbury Sixth Form 2021-2022**

# **UCAS Guide For Students**



## Applying to University

Before you actually apply you need to have carried out your own research into universities, courses, locations and living costs. You need to take all of these things into consideration, for example, if you apply to a London university could you afford to live there?

The most likely places where you will find information are:

- UCAS Website – includes the UCAS Course Search section. (They have details of every course currently offered and typical grade or points offers).
- Advice and guidance services – includes the careers adviser, your Teachers, Tutor and Head of Sixth Form.
- Prospectuses.
- Universities – websites and visits.
- Higher education fair and lectures.

Assuming that you've done your research, you've decided on your courses and universities then you must apply to UCAS. You do so by completing a UCAS form. This is an application form that is completed by you online.

## Key Dates

For you to ensure that you are in the most competitive position to secure the course(s) you want, you must meet certain deadlines.

### **July - Year 12**

In the July of Year 12 you will need to register yourself with UCAS. This is essential because it will allow you to generate your own unique password to access your application online at any time you want to work on it. We recommend that you register before the summer holiday.

As part of the registration process you will be asked for the school's buzzword. This changes each year and will be given to you by your Form Tutor and Mr Backwell.

### **October 15<sup>th</sup> - Year 13**

If you are applying to Oxbridge, to do Medicine, Veterinary Science or Dental School then your application must reach UCAS before this date. It is not a negotiable deadline!

### **Early December - Year 13**

This is the final deadline for everyone else. It is set just ahead of the UCAS deadline giving your Tutor enough time to process your application and write your reference. If you miss this deadline then we cannot guarantee that your application will be processed in time to meet the UCAS deadline.

To process your application UCAS make a charge of £26. Unless advised otherwise you will need to provide a credit/debit card payment for this amount. Firstly, you must access the UCAS Online Application site which is part of the UCAS website.

It will take you through the following steps:

Registration – you must register with UCAS before you can start the application. It will cost you nothing. Make sure that you make a note of your username and password (we won't have a copy of it).

About You – here you will enter your personal details. You must fill in any section with an asterisk\*.

At this stage enter your fee code as 02. This will allow you to apply to the Student Finance England for funding. You will receive more information on this in Year 13.

Courses - It is in this section that you identify the courses and institutions you wish to study at. Check with up-to-date prospectuses as you fill this in. You can make up to 5 course choices on your UCAS form.

Education – This is a straightforward account of your academic achievements at secondary school. Unless you are told otherwise, enter your grades as grade letters (e.g., A) but your A2 qualifications would be entered as 'pending'. You should also enter any other grades such as Financial Capability, EPQ or Core Maths (pending if you have yet to take them).

Employment – This is a straightforward account of your part time job(s). There is a possibility that they may be contacted for a reference but only in unusual circumstances.

Your personal statement – We cannot stress how important this is; making the right impact is so important.

Reference – your tutor will write a reference to support your application. He or she will use feedback from your subject teachers to help build this.

Once your reference has been completed and your application has been sent to UCAS you will receive a confirmation letter and a password that will allow you to track the progress of your application.



## Key Registration Reminders

You will not have to pay anything to register nor will you need to complete the form if you change your mind.

The form is completed online. You have your own personal login code. The school will not have a copy of this, and we cannot log on and edit your form. However, we are able to view your form and monitor your progress in completing it.

You cannot send your completed form away until the beginning of September. Be aware that when you complete your form and send it away it actually comes through to the school so that we can write and attach your reference. This can take a week to complete. We will also check your completed form and send it back to you if there is a problem.

The UCAS deadline will be the 15th of January. Any form that arrives after this date does not need to be considered by the university.

The UCAS deadline for Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine, Veterinary Science and Dentistry is 15th October. Remember to get your form in at least a week before this date so that we can check your form through.

Within a week of finally sending off your form you will receive a letter/email from UCAS confirming the receipt of your form and giving you a special 'Track' code. This allows you to log into UCAS Track and monitor the progress of your application. You will often see offers appear here before you receive information through any other means.

## Offers and Rejections

You may receive your first offer within a week after applying. You may have to wait months though – there is no need to be alarmed if you don't receive offers immediately. Once you have decisions from all five of your university choices (offers or rejections) you will receive confirmation from UCAS and be given a date whereby you must make your final decisions.



You will need to make one offer your 'First' choice and another one your 'Insurance' choice. The insurance choice is usually a lower grade offer than the first choice. If you think about it logically it will have to be that way round!

It is really important that you research university and course choices fully beforehand. Every year there are students who tell us that they have only received offers from the universities that they don't want to go to. This begs the question - 'why did you apply to them in the first place?!'.

If you get no offers at all you will be eligible for UCAS Extra. UCAS Extra is available from March onwards and offers a student a 'last gasp' opportunity to apply for one extra course – from those available.

Student university places will change from conditional to unconditional from the moment that the universities receive you're a level examination grades. In other words, they tell you if you have got a place when the results come out in August.

Students who fail to get a place may go through 'Clearing'. Essentially, universities that have spare places will accept students on lower grade profiles if they think that the student is suitable for that course. Sometimes students who are desperate to go to university will accept clearing places in haste but regret jumping onto a course at a university that they haven't researched properly.

Students who do better than expected can go through UCAS Adjustment. If you do better than expected and get grades that are better than your first-choice university offer you can register with 'Adjustment'. This allows you a short period of time to 'shop around' for something better – a 'better' university or course. This is only available in late August.

## Choosing a Course

The title here should really be - 'choosing the **right** course'. It is very important that you are making informed choices about *what* you want to study and *where* you want to study. A university education is very expensive so you must get value for money.

Before you even apply to university you should have done a lot of research into courses and universities. You should at least consider the following points:

**Location** - What type of university do you want to study at? Do you want to live in a big city? Small town? Campus university in a more rural setting? The UCAS site will guide you to various places that offer information - including the Times Online league tables for the best universities for different courses.

**Courses** - There are literally thousands of courses at hundreds of universities. The 'UCAS Search' option at the UCAS website gives an overview of all of the courses available - and the year that they are available. You will see that most courses are 3 years long, but some are only 2 years long whilst others maybe 4 or 5 years - often with a year out in employment or working abroad. Some courses will work towards a single honours degree whilst other degrees are combined - with some unusual combinations.

**Entry Requirements** - It is very important that you apply for courses where you have a realistic chance of meeting the entry requirements. If a university makes you an offer, they expect you to get those grades. If you don't make the grades it is very unlikely that you will go to that university.

Offers are often made on the basis of the teacher reference but the most important benchmark that the universities use before making you an offer are your predicted grades and previous academic record; this includes GCSE grades too.

**Examination subjects** - occasionally students need to have studied or achieved examination grades in a particular subject.



## UCAS Points

The universities usually make offers in the form of grades e.g., BBB or UCAS points. UCAS changed the tariff for courses starting from September 2017 to include more qualifications. The new Tariff simply uses a different set of numbers, which some universities use to describe qualifications and grades in their entry requirements. Only one third of university courses use the Tariff, and most use qualifications and grades.

Just because a qualification is on the Tariff, doesn't mean a university will accept it. Therefore, it is really important to check the entry requirements for the course you're interested in. There are only a certain number of qualifications on the Tariff. A university may accept a qualification even if it isn't on the Tariff, so it's best to check with them to see if they will accept your qualification. Remember, lots of universities do not use Tariff points.

You can find the full list by visiting the UCAS website and clicking through to the [UCAS Undergraduate: Tariff points section](#).

Official title: Advanced GCE and Advanced VCE

Grade	Tariff points
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

AS and AS VCE

Official title: Advanced Subsidiary GCE and Advanced Subsidiary VCE

Grade	Tariff points
A	20
B	16
C	12
D	10
E	6

## Personal Statements

The personal statement is an important part of your UCAS application. It is very much like a C.V. in that it is your chance to explain why you are the best person to be offered a place at the university of your choice, on the course of your choice.

The statement must be a maximum of 4000 characters (with spaces), or 47 lines – whichever you hit first! This means it needs to be drafted as 4000 characters is not actually very much writing. You will find that your first draft might just be random paragraphs of ideas, and you will gradually craft this into something more polished.

There are plenty of Websites that will advise and assist you, but it is absolutely essential that you never, ever plagiarize. Plagiarism is when you submit work which has been written by someone else. Universities use plagiarism software to detect plagiarized material from the internet. **Do not do it!** A personal statement is personal anyway, so it is always better written by you.

The UCAS form provides you with a section into which you can cut and paste your drafted, proof-read, spellchecked, word perfect final statement. There aren't really any excuses for spelling mistakes; get several people to proof-read it for you. Silly mistakes will immediately be noticed by admissions tutors.

The statement **should** include an opening paragraph that explains your interest in the course, how it will benefit you and why you might be the ideal student to study it.

The second section **could** include transferable skills that you have developed, interests within the field of study that you have pursued, experiences that you have had and what you have learnt from them. You could discuss what has interested you from your A Level study and how this has led you to independent study outside of the course. You might include how university is just the next step towards a particular goal/job.

The final, shorter section **could** be more about you as a person: your personality, interests and hobbies – how these have developed you or brought you to the point where applying for your chosen course is inevitable.

**Top tip:** You **should** always ‘show’ not ‘tell’. Don’t state that you are a good team leader – illustrate your leadership skills in context. Use precise examples which prove your claims.



## Student Finance

It is very difficult to give you advice on student finance - the situation remains, as ever, very fluid. Any increases in fees, the cost of living, taxation (including VAT) will affect you and your loans. You will probably be paying back the money that you borrow to enable you to study. Why probably? There are certain exemptions, bursaries and other reasons why you may pay less, and we will explore them presently.

What follows is up to date as of January 2021.

At present in England and Wales a university can charge you up to £9250 per year to study at their university. These are your tuition fees. (Remember that is per year - this is the fee that some universities would like to increase.)

On top of these fees are your living costs. These will vary greatly depending on where you wish to study, what type of accommodation you wish to live in and what sort of life you want to live at university.

The typical accommodation costs (if you choose to live in a hall of residence, in a university such as Portsmouth) are approximately:

£110 - £130 per week - self catering

£150 - £170 per week - fully catered (except at certain times on a weekend)

Those figures are per week so you can do the basic math to work out a term or an annual figure. On top of this figure, you have any additional food, books, study materials, travel costs and leisure costs.

Any student can apply to the student loan company **Student Finance England** for a loan that covers part or all of your costs. Visit

<https://www.gov.uk/contact-student-finance-england>

The screenshot shows the GOV.UK website for Student Finance England. At the top, there is a search bar and a navigation menu. Below the menu, there is a breadcrumb trail: Home > Education, training and skills > Funding and finance for students > Student grants, bursaries and scholarships > Student finance login. The main heading is 'Student finance login'. Below this, there is a sign-in/register section with a list of actions: view statements, track applications, check payment due dates, update personal details, reset passwords, and apply for finance. There is also a link for parents/partners to submit or update income information. On the right side, there are two sections: 'Student grants, bursaries and scholarships' with links to NHS bursaries, contact information, and forms; and 'Student loans' with a link to apply for student finance.

You can apply from as early as January (Year 13) but there are also strict deadlines in April or June that you need to meet if you want the money in time. The application forms are available for download or application online from the Student Finance website.

Students can apply for the following:

Tuition Fees.

Maintenance Loan - this is a loan of up to £8944 (depending on which part of the country you study in) and will need to be paid back.

The tuition fees will be paid directly to the university - and not to your bank account. The maintenance loan is paid directly into your bank account - in instalments. There is also help available for a student with specific learning difficulties or those applying for NHS supported courses.

It is important that every one of you explore what offers, inducements and bursaries the universities have put together to encourage you to make them your 'first choice' in your application process.

Each university has its own individual set of offers that range from cash payments, reduction on accommodation costs, laptops, money off on sports or academic equipment. This can be awarded for hardship, academic excellence, sporting excellence and other things such as making the university your first choice. When you are deciding on a university you should look at the university websites/literature for specific guidance.

You start to repay your loan after graduation when you earn more than £25000 per year. You start being charged interest on your loan as soon as you receive any money. The interest is very low so in real terms. When you start to repay your loan the loan company will take 9% of any salary you earn over £25000 – every month. This will start off as a very small amount but will increase as you earn more over time.

Please note - if a student is applying for a grant/loan they must apply every year for each year they intend to study at university. Students who are taking a gap year and intend to start at a university in September 2020 can only apply from January 2019 onwards.

A simple breakdown of what may be available to a student - based on household income:

Household Income	£25000	£30000	£40000	£50000	
Tuition Fee Loan	£92500	£92500	£92500	£92500	(Max per year - may be less)



<b>Student Maintenance Loan</b>	£8944	£7612	£6434	£5256	(Means tested against household income)
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You will find full information by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/contact-student-finance-england> including tools to assess how much you will be eligible for.

## University Interviews

There are so many people applying to university these days that it is very difficult for an Admissions Tutor to interview any or all of you. Most of you will NOT be interviewed for a place at university. Even if you are invited to an 'Applicants' Day' you will generally find that the format is less formal and is more about selling the university to you - now that you've successfully got an offer. An 'Applicants' Day' is for successful applicants (who have offers) and is not the same as an Open Day.

However, it is possible that you may be asked to interview. This is more likely if you are applying to:

- Cambridge/ Oxford
- Medicine
- Veterinary Science
- Dentistry
- Physiotherapy
- Any course that requires you to present a portfolio of your work (such as Design).

We will run an interview workshop for students in the Autumn Term and it is normal practice to provide a mock interview for any student applying for any of the courses listed above. **Always be prepared!** If you are asked to interview, and you do wish for support and guidance, then you should contact Mr Backwell or Ms Hall/Mrs Dodd.



## Open Days

Open days are an essential part of your research into the university and courses of your choice. Some of these days are during holidays or weekends but inevitably some will fall during school days - often on a Wednesday.

If you need to go to an open day which falls on a school day you will need to bring in a letter with the date of the planned visit and the name of the institution. Hand this letter in to Student Services.

## Process Overview:

June Year 12 - Register with UCAS.

1st September Year 13- start of the UCAS cycle. Applications can be sent from this date.  
General Advice - **Apply Early.**

15th October Year 13 - Deadline for Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science. If you don't meet this deadline **you will not** be considered!

Early December Year 13 - school deadline for UCAS forms. No member of staff will be checking applications or writing references during the Christmas holidays. **Meet this deadline!**

26th January Year 13- Deadline for all UK applicants except for some Art and Design (Route B courses).

Late February Year 13 - UCAS Extra opens.

24th March Year 13 - Deadline for most Art and Design (Route B) courses.

From any point after you apply - Receive offers from universities and colleges.

Once you receive all 5 decisions - confirm firm and insurance choices.

Late April Year 13 - deadline for non-means tested applications for student finance.

Late June Year 13 - deadline for means tested applications for student finance.

Mid-August Year 13- A level results - confirmation of university place.

Mid-August Year 13 - Clearing vacancies published. Adjustment period opens.

Late September – University courses start.

