



## **Where to study – fact sheet**

### What factors should be considered?

- Home or Away – Do you want to stay in your home town or move far away? Would you feel more comfortable in a place that you know?
- Large city vs. smaller town – If you are shy would you be happier in a smaller university where you won't feel lost in a crowd as opposed to a university in a major city. Think about where you would be most comfortable living. Can you get used to navigating yourself around a big city?
- City/Campus Location – Exeter, Keele, Birmingham, York Universities all have everything situated on site. This means you are likely to get to know people really well. City locations mean you have the benefit of city life. You need to decide which you would prefer.
- Cost of living – Going to University can be expensive. Different areas of the UK can be cheaper for accommodation.
- Bursaries and Scholarships – Lots of Universities will now be offering bursaries and scholarships to certain students, and for certain subjects of study. Find out if you will qualify for one of these scholarships or bursaries to help you through University.
- Part time work availability – If you need to get a job to supplement your income, what is the local job market like. Does the University employ students. Be aware, if you go to Oxford and Cambridge you are often not allowed to work during term time, but you can make this up during the long holidays.
- Academic and Social Facilities – How good is the Students Union? What sort of societies do they have? What are the sports facilities like? What about the library, is it 24/7? Are there plenty of computers?
- Student support – Are the student support services readily available? Will you get extra support? Can you have a studies skills tutor? Will you get extra time to borrow books in the library? Do you get any extra bursaries?
- What is the accommodation like? Are you guaranteed accommodation in your first year? Is the accommodation on campus or is it in another part of the town/city? Is en-suite available?

Remember rather than just looking at a prospectus to decide whether you want to go somewhere it is worth visiting the university on an open day – you will then get a feel for the place and a chance to talk to current students/lectures/student support staff.



## How to apply to University

### 1. The UCAS system ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com))

Applications to all universities in the UK must be made through UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admission Service)

There are two ways to apply:

#### Apply online

The online application system “**apply**” enables applicants to apply directly through the UCAS website. Once a school, college, careers or Connexions office has signed up to use the service, students can complete their UCAS application form online from anywhere that has access to the World Wide Web.

#### Electronic Application System (EAS)

The EAS allows applicants to fill in their application form on a personal computer at the school, college, careers or connexions office or even at home. The EAS is a CD based product and is not available to applicants on an individual basis, and applications must be submitted to UCAS through a teacher or careers adviser either via the internet, email or by disk.

## 2. UCAS and University timetable

1 September	Application process begins
15 October	Deadline for the receipt at UCAS of applications for Oxford, Cambridge, medicine, dentistry, and veterinary science courses
1 January	Opening date for receiving art and design route B applications
15 January	Deadline for all course applications from the UK (including art and design route A but <i>not</i> art and design route B)
October to June	Universities consider applications. This could be done by a central admissions office at the university or by an individual member of the academic staff responsible for his or her own course.

### 4 Possible outcomes

1. Conditional offer – e.g. ‘You can have a place on the course if you get 3 A Levels with grade B or 120 UCAS tariff points.
2. Unconditional offer – e.g. ‘You already have the necessary grades or requirements for the course and we want to make you an offer’.
3. Interview – e.g. ‘We need to ask you more before we can make a decision’. Students applying for teaching have to be interviewed as a legal requirement. Those applying for art and design, performing arts, and law or medicine are also likely to be interviewed. Mature students are more likely to be interviewed than younger students.

Even if students are not interviewed it is important that they visit the universities. Applicants will usually be invited to an open day at the universities they have applied to.

4. Reject – e.g. ‘We are sorry but we cannot offer you a place on the course’. Most people are rejected simply because they are not studying the right subjects, or are not predicted the right grades. It is essential to do proper research into what a university wants. If you want feedback on your application you can contact the university.

7 March	Advisory closing date for art and design route B applications
16 March	Start of UCAS extra allowing students to make additional choices, one at a time, if they have not received any offers. Student must have applied through the traditional route and received no offers to go through UCAS extra.
End of April	If students have received all 6 decisions by 31 <sup>st</sup> March they will need to inform UCAS of the courses they wish to select as their FIRM (first) choice and INSURANCE (second) choice.
End of May	If students applied by January 15 <sup>th</sup> they should expect to have all university decisions by now.
12 June	Last date for art and design route B applications
30 June	Final deadline for all applications
Mid August	Exam results are received, universities confirm places for the students holding conditional offers who achieved the right grades/points.  Clearing vacancy service opens; universities with places still available on their courses advertise them in newspapers, on teletext and the web on a first-come-first-served basis. Students holding no offers through UCAS can telephone universities to apply for spare places.
September	Enrolment and university life begins.

### 3. The UCAS application form

Page one:

- Students list their personal details.
- Students list the 6 courses they wish to apply to in alphabetical order of university. They do not have to use all 6 choices if they do not want to. It is possible to apply to a maximum of only 4 medical schools.
- Students cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge.
- A student could choose 6 courses at 6 different universities, 6 different courses at the same university or a combination.
- Some consistency in course choice makes writing the personal statement easier – there is only one personal statement on the form and it must refer to the choice of up to 6 courses.
- UCAS codes must be correct or the wrong course could have been applied for by accident.

Page two:

- Students list all the qualifications already taken and marks awarded in the top part. This will usually be GCSEs and AS exams.
- In the bottom part students list all the courses they are taking at the moment, where they don't have the exam results or assessments marks yet. The date an exam will be taken should be clearly stated.

Page three:

- Personal statement and details of any work experience

Page four:

- The schools or college reference – students think this has nothing to do with them, how wrong they can be.
- When applying, students should be aware that references are based upon their work so far. It is likely the reference will not be based on Year 13 work and results. It is therefore very important that Year 12 work is up to a good standard. Access students at college have a problem in that they will only just have started their course when the application form is due. Tutors will usually offer to update the reference in January when some course work has been completed.
- Schools and colleges will set their own deadline for the receipt of UCAS forms well before the 15<sup>th</sup> January in order to check that it is fully completed and sent on time.



## **How to complete a winning personal statement**

### 1. Things to consider:

- If you are not invited to interview this could be the only chance to make an impression with an admissions tutor.
- Admission tutors are often the academic staff that teach on the course you are applying for. They will want enthusiastic and interesting people on their courses, not just those who can get the right grades.
- Admission tutors are often very busy academics that return after lectures to a huge pile of UCAS forms every day during the admissions cycle. Your application has to stand out from the pile, in a good way.
- The personal statement is often the way an admissions tutor will decide between two applicants with the same predicted grades.
- The UCAS form is photocopied and reduced to half its size, before being sent to universities. It is essential that you use nothing smaller than size 12 font when typing, as it may not be legible once copied. You should also ensure clear paragraphs and white space is evident to make reading easier.
- It is not acceptable to have spelling or grammatical errors in the personal statement, so check carefully. Get someone else to proof read your personal statement for you.

### 2. What do the universities want to see in a personal statement?

All admissions tutors want to see answers to the following questions:

- Why have you decided to study this course?
- What knowledge do you have about the course, subject area, career you have chosen?
- What are you studying at school or college that you enjoy, and how has this affected your decision to study the course chosen?
- What activities do you get involved in outside of study time, both at school and outside school? Universities do not just want academic robots but interesting, lively and well-rounded people.

- What work experience do you have and what skills has this developed? Again, particularly important if relevant to the course choice.
- If you know what career you are hoping to go into, what is your motivation to do this?

Final thoughts on personal statements:

- Practice makes perfect! There are no limits to the amount of drafts you can make before the final version is ready.
- Get others to read, check and comment on your statement including friends and family.
- The statement should reflect your own individuality – admissions tutors can spot the standard formula statement a mile off. Do not ever be tempted to copy another personal statement.
- Do not ever be tempted to lie in a personal statement – it is a dangerous game, especially if you are invited to interview.
- Try to get your own personality across – difficult but a real winner if it can be achieved.
- Always use correct language and grammar, do not use slang or text language in any shape or form!
- Do not try to be wild and wacky; try to get your personality across without doing something controversial.
- Do not write too much – short concise answers are all you need.
- Use humour with extreme caution – after reading a hundred UCAS forms, a sense of humour may wear a bit thin!
- Remember to answer the question: WHY YOU?