

# **Higher education explained**

Higher education includes studying for qualifications such as degrees, higher national diplomas or foundation degrees.

Courses are either **vocational** i.e. linked to a career or **academic**. The latter means that this course will be used as graduate recruitment.

## **some good reasons for choosing higher education.**

- Some vocational programmes are **directly related to particular work areas** e.g. Accountancy and Teaching.
- A higher education qualification is **essential for some careers** like Medicine, and Architecture.
- A degree or HND can **improve your son's or daughter's chances of getting a fulfilling job and their financial potential.**

- Universities bring together students from a variety of backgrounds. This interaction can **strengthen understanding** of different cultures and beliefs.
- Higher education develops **important transferable skills** such as numeracy, communication and information technology, which can give your son or daughter an edge in the fast-changing world of employment.
- Undertaking a higher education course gives applicants **time** to fully consider their future career.

# Choosing courses

Choosing which university or college to go to can be a life-changing decision. Your son or daughter should do as much **research** as possible so that they choose the **right course** for the **right reasons**. Here are some things to consider:

# Entry requirements

Is my son or daughter making a **realistic application?**

Universities state the entry requirements for a course in one of **two ways:**

actual grades: e.g. AAB

OR

The UCAS tariff e.g. 120 points (equivalent of BBB)

A\*: 56, A:48, B:40, C:32, D:24, E:16

- Is it a course that is a **requirement** for a future career?
- Is it a course that offers a **combination of study and work**? These are called **SANDWICH** courses
- Does the course offer a **combination of study** of e.g. two subjects?
- How much will it **cost** for your son or daughter to study a particular course at a particular university?

# Choosing a university

Your son or daughter should consider two issues when choosing where to go:

- the institution
- its location

Universities come in different '**styles**': some are based at **more than one campus**, whereas others are on **one site**; some are **formal and academic** and others are more **modern and relaxed**. They need to choose **the location that's right for them**.

# Which is the “best” university?

Different places suit different people, so it **depends what your son or daughter is looking for**. There are different guides and league tables that can help, but check the source as it may be biased: some universities post league tables on their websites which show their courses at number one.

For information and impartial advice check the **Times Online** (requires a subscription) or **The Complete University Guide**, an interactive site where they can choose their requirements and create their own unique table.

# Attending an Open day

Open days are one of the best ways to discover the good and bad points of a place

They will give your son or daughter an idea of what is on offer, and a chance to see if they will feel comfortable spending three or four years at the institution.

# When to apply

## There are different application deadlines

- **15 October** - application deadline for applications for Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary medicine and for all courses at Oxford and Cambridge.
- **15 January** - application deadline for applications for all courses and some art and design courses.
- **24 March** - application deadline for some art and design courses

# How to apply

- Your son or daughter applies by going to [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) and using the Apply application process.
- The cost to apply is £24.00 this year. We collect it in and pay it to UCAS as the forms are sent.

# **Making choices on the UCAS form**

A maximum of **five choices** is available. The majority of students pick the same or similar subject at five different places.

## Things to note.....

- There are over 50,000 courses in the UCAS system, each with a unique code. It is very important that your son or daughter **double-checks** that they're applying for the **correct course**.
- Each university can view the application at the same time and choices are **not listed** in order of preference.
- Universities **cannot see** where else your son or daughter has applied. They will only see any other choices after you have replied to your offers.
- The distance between the chosen university and your family home will **affect you** as well as your son or daughter.

# The Personal Statement

- It is the applicant's opportunity to tell universities about their **suitability** for the course. They need to demonstrate their **enthusiasm and commitment**, and above all, ensure that they stand out from the crowd.
- Some universities find personal statements crucial when making decisions, whereas others might not put as much emphasis on them. Since your son or daughter doesn't know who will be looking at their statement, the safest thing is to do a good job. The person reading the statement is an expert in the chosen area of interest so they will want to know the reasons why they have chosen the subject.

## **Sending the application**

When your son/daughter has completed the application, we will write a reference and send the application to UCAS.

N.B. It is strongly advised that you encourage your son or daughter to complete their application form **as soon as possible** given that the sooner they get the form in, the sooner they will hear from each university. Hopefully this will provide a positive incentive to do well in their levels.

**The internal deadline for completed UCAS forms is by October mid term.**

# Changes to the application

Applicants sometimes realise that they have made a mistake. Depending on when it happens, there are things that can be done:

- Changes to personal details can be done in **TRACK**.
- If the problem is a change of mind about a course, they can change this in **TRACK** within **seven days** from the date on their welcome letter.

# What happens next?

Once UCAS has received a completed application:

- UCAS process the application and sends the applicant a welcome letter confirming their personal details and choices.
- The universities decide whether to make an offer or not.

Each university will consider your son or daughter's application against their **own admissions criteria**. Each has their own criteria and their own ways of working, so your son or daughter can expect to hear from them at **different times**. They may be contacted within a very short period of time or it may be some months before they hear anything. The university will decide whether to offer a place or not and will send their decision to UCAS and through **TRACK** on the UCAS web site.

# Invitations to interviews or auditions

Universities sometimes invite applicants to an interview or audition, or ask them to provide a portfolio of work, an essay or other piece of work. This is done through **TRACK**.

# **Decisions sent by universities**

## **A Conditional offer**

A conditional offer means that the university will offer a place if your son or daughter meets certain conditions, which are usually based on their exams.

# **Withdrawn application**

A choice can be withdrawn by your son or daughter or by the university. The reason will be displayed in **TRACK**.

## Unsuccessful application

This means that the university has decided not to offer them a place on the course. Please remember that universities can decline an applicant for many reasons. The university may provide a reason for their decision on **TRACK**. However, if no reason is shown on **TRACK**, they will have to contact the university directly to discuss the reason why they were unsuccessful.

# Replying to offers

Only when UCAS has decisions about all choices with at least one offer, UCAS will ask the applicant to reply to their offers using **TRACK** in the following ways:

- **firm choice.** This is their first and preferred choice out of all the offers they have received. They only have one firm choice.
- **insurance choice.** This acts as a back-up to their firm choice. They can only have one insurance choice.
- **decline.** Once they have decided which offer to accept firmly, and which (if any) to accept as an insurance, they must decline all other offers. If they don't want to accept any of the offers, they can decline them all. They will then be normally eligible to use **Extra** or **Clearing**.

## **No offers. UCAS Extra**

If your son or daughter has used all their five choices and been unsuccessful in all of them, or declined any offers received, **Extra** gives them the opportunity to have an additional choice through UCAS. This occurs between the end of February and the end of June in the application cycle and is done through **TRACK**.

- If your son or daughter has not used all the five choices and has not replied to an offer, adding a choice or choices might be possible.
- **Extra and Clearing** could provide an alternative solution. This entails declining any offers received, so there is an element of risk involved.
- Each year some applicants pass their exams with better results than expected. And this may mean that some will have not only met the conditions of their firm choice, but will have exceeded them. UCAS has introduced **Adjustment** for these applicants - it provides an opportunity for them to reconsider where and what to study.

## What happens next?

What happens next depends on your son's or daughter's exam results in August. If they meet all the conditions of their offer, they will be accepted by the university. Even if they have not quite met the requirements, the university may lower its offer and still accept them. Advise them to check **TRACK** to see their decisions.

# Clearing

If your son or daughter has not met the conditions of their firm or insurance offer, they will be eligible for **Clearing**. **Clearing** is available from July to applicants who have completed an application but have not managed to secure a place for the current year. They will be notified by UCAS and the process is managed using **TRACK**.

# Adjustment

Each year some applicants pass their exams with better results than expected. This may mean that some will have not only met the conditions of their firm choice, but will have exceeded them. **Adjustment** has been introduced by UCAS for these applicants - it provides an opportunity for them to reconsider where and what to study. They have **five days** from the moment they receive an unconditional offer. This is managed through UCAS.

## Other options

If your son or daughter hasn't found the place they are looking for, or they've changed their mind about going to university this year, they could:

- Undertake further study and reapply. The school can help your son or daughter do this. (There is an administration fee of £25.00 to write a new reference).
- Take a GAP year to consider what they want to do next
- Start an apprenticeship. Combined work and training
- Find a job
- Start a business

<b>L6 Spring Term</b>		
<b>Further and Higher Education Research</b>		
<b>Making the right choices at 18</b>	→	
<b>Choosing a university. What is important to you?</b>	<b>Oxbridge Process begins</b>	
<b>Researching Courses and Universities</b>	<b>UKCAT &amp; LNAT information distributed</b>	
<b>Writing your Personal Statement</b>		
<b>U6 Xmas Term</b>	<b>January - May</b>	<b>August</b>
<b>UCAS form Completion</b>	<b>Update of CV</b>	<b>A level results service</b>
<b>Tutorial and individual interviews</b>	<b>Replying to your offers</b>	
	<b>UCAS Extra</b>	
	<b>Alternative Strategies including Clearing</b>	
	<b>Scholarships</b>	
	<b>Personal Budgeting. External Presentation</b>	
	<b>Applying for loans</b>	
	<b>Moving On</b>	
	<b>Coping with Transition</b>	

# Where they should be now in the application process.

Your son or daughter has weekly a tutorial class. In that class, students have been registered with UCAS and have completed generic information common to all applications. They should now be:

- **Finalising** choice of courses and universities in conjunction with their **predicted grades from the target setting process**
- **Refining** their personal statements

Once they have completed their form, their tutorial teacher checks it and it is sent to a referee for eventual dispatch to UCAS. **Deadline for completion is October mid term at the very latest.**

# Applications to non UK universities

Irish Universities: On line applications start at the beginning of November and go onto January. There are some courses e.g. Medicine that have restricted conditions to application. [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)

European Universities: Have become increasingly popular (Dutch in particular) given that some universities are charging much lower than some parts of the UK.

Check: <http://www.bachelorsportal.eu/>  
<http://www.degreesahead.co.uk/>

# Mock Interviews

- Purpose: to help students prepare for university entrance interviews, scholarships, apprenticeships, placement year and job interviews.
- Due to previous successes, the Principal has decided that mock interviews should be compulsory for all Year 14 students.

# How do students arrange their interview?

- Application forms have been emailed to all students and parents. These should be completed to a high standard and returned to me by Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September.
- Local universities, colleges, businesses and parents with experience of interviewing will be invited to school for the event. Subject area will be matched as far as possible. Medicine and Teaching will always be interviewed by subject specialists and university admissions staff.
- Medical interviews will take the MMI format with Mr. Beaton overseeing this section of the event.

# Preparing for Interview

- Some practice questions and links to useful websites will be emailed to the students.
- A guest speaker will be invited into school to speak about interview techniques, how to dress, how to answer difficult questions and any other questions they may have.

# The Interview

- Students will be given a time to attend their interview in the Maths corridor. These will all be in the evening to facilitate the calendars of the professionals conducting the interviews.
- Students should dress in professional clothing.
- Interviews usually last around 15 minutes.
- All students will be given feedback both to encourage them and allow them to refine their technique.