



UCAS APPLY 2018 Student Guidance Handbook

This handbook is for students who are applying to UCAS where Skegness Grammar School is acting as their referee

Disclaimer

Applying to university is your responsibility – remember you are applying through UCAS, it is not the school who is applying for you – in the UK, the amount of student support and guidance with UCAS varies between schools/colleges, dependent on time available and resources.

At Skegness Grammar School we do believe in the importance of providing as much help, advice, support and guidance as possible. However, the school accepts no responsibility for your application to UCAS.

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The information in this handbook is current at the time of print. Updated information can be obtained from UCAS - www.ucas.com

UCAS TARRIFF POINTS

Extended Project Qualification	AS level	A level	New Tariff points
		A*	56
		A	48
		B	40
		C	32
A*			28
A		D	24
B	A		20
C	B	E	16
D	C		12
	D		10
E			8
	E		6

UCAS Tariff Calculator

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/entry-requirements/tariff/calculator>

Fact sheet for Parents/Carers

<https://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/Tariff%20factsheet%20-%20for%20parents.pdf>

UCAS TIMETABLE

6 September 2017	Opening date for UCAS applications
1 October 2017	Deadline for receipt of applications to UCAS Conservatories for Music courses (deadlines for non-music courses vary).
15 October 2017 18:00 hours (UK time)	<p>Closing date for applications to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ University of Oxford ✓ University of Cambridge <p>And also all universities for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Medicine ✓ Dentistry ✓ Veterinary Science/Medicine
15 January 2018 18:00 hours (UK time)	Closing date for UK applications including some 'Art & Design' courses) (Check deadlines for your chosen courses - contact universities or visit UCAS website 'course information screen' in course search) – if your application is received after this date, the university will only consider it if they still have vacancies.
Early 2018	Apply for student finance.
25 February 2018	Extra starts for eligible applicants.
24 March 2018 18:00 hours (UK time)	Closing date for some 'Art & Design' courses (Check deadlines for your chosen courses - contact universities or visit UCAS website 'course information screen' in course search)
30 June 2018 18:00 hours (UK time)	Closing date for late applications Applications received on or after 18:00 (UK time) on 30 June will automatically be entered into Clearing
4 July 2018	Last date for applicants to add an Extra choice
31 August 2018	The deadline for any remaining conditions to be met – otherwise the university may not accept the applicant.
31 August 2018	The end of Adjustment

If you are applying to Oxford or Cambridge or for Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science/Medicine or Law at some universities there will also be additional 'test' deadlines in September.

Mr Sturman will set internal deadlines when the school needs to receive your application, in order to check it, add the reference and send it to UCAS.

Please write your course UCAS deadline date set by your FT	
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HOW TO REGISTER FOR UCAS

Make a note of your username, password and security answers below:

Username	<input type="text"/>
Password	<input type="text"/>
Security answers	<input type="text"/>
Group*	<input type="text"/>

If you lose your username or password click on 'forgotten login' on the log-in page of Apply. If you are locked out of Apply contact Mr Sturman. If you forget your security answers you will need to contact UCAS.

HINTS AND TIPS TO HELP YOU USE 'Apply'

Use the help screens indicated by a red question mark as you complete your application. If you need more help speak to your FT or Mr Sturman

Here are some hints and tips that past users have found helpful:

PERSONAL DETAILS SECTION Choosing your fee code	Click on question mark for detailed help screen. The fee code for UK students wishing to apply for finance is 02.
EDUCATION SECTION Enter ALL qualifications you have completed. DON'T FORGET to include ALL qualifications you will be taking this year.	Speak to Mr Sturman if you are unsure. It is essential your qualifications are entered correctly.
To enter qualifications from abroad:	If you cannot find your qualification on the list select Other (International EU qualifications) or Other (International non-EU qualifications)
ULN –Unique Learner Number	Ask Mr Sturman
CHOICES SECTION Point of Entry	If you wish to start in the first year of the course, leave the box blank If a university has agreed to consider your application for year 2 or 3 entry, enter the relevant number for the year indicating year group you wish to join.
To make a deferred entry application	Select Start Date and indicate the year you want to start.

PERSONAL STATEMENT SECTION

Use the resources available to help you complete this section.

See personal statement section in this booklet for tips and examples.

Visit www.ucas.com
Personal statement information is available in the student section under applying.

Resources are available through your FT

See the deadline dates for the UCAS process at Skegness Grammar School.

UCAS checks statements for plagiarism – Do not use any materials taken directly from personal statement examples.

PRINTING A COPY OF YOUR UCAS APPLICATION

If you are going to review your application with your FT, it can be helpful to take along a printed version of it. Select **View All detail**, Click and Print.

IMPORTANT SGS APPLICATION DATES FOR UCAS 2018

Internal Deadlines are in *italics*

Tuesday 4 July 2017

Early entry students should hand their pink UCAS reference request slips to all subject teachers before the end of term

Friday 14 July 2017

Initial Draft of Personal Statement to FT

Wednesday 6 September 2017

Opening date for receiving applications

Tuesday 12 September 2017

Deadline for all students to have handed their pink UCAS reference request slips to all subject teachers

Friday 29 September 2017

Final Draft of Personal Statement to FT. For premier league University entrants, Medics and Oxbridge candidates this is the deadline for final drafts to be handed FT

Saturday 1 October 2017 – 18:00 hours (UK time)

Deadline for receipt of applications to UCAS Conservatories for Music courses (deadlines for non-music vary)

Monday 2 October 2017

First internal deadline for UCAS applications to be submitted to Mr Sturman

Tuesday 3 October 2017

Personal Statements and references to be with Mr Sturman for Oxbridge candidates and Medics/Vets

Thursday 5 October 2017

Final deadline for Medics and Oxbridge candidates to submit their applications to Mr Sturman to ensure they are processed before the 15th deadline.

copy of Personal Statement to be returned to FT for all other applicants

Final

Sunday 15 October 2017 – 18:00 hours (UK time)

Last date for applications for Oxford and Cambridge, or for Veterinary Science, Veterinary Medicine, Medicine and Dentistry, to be received at UCAS and be regarded as on-time. Also suggested final date for submission of applications for those students applying for premier league Universities or competitive courses

Wednesday 18 October 2017

Applications which were submitted to Mr Sturman on or before 1 October will be submitted to UCAS

Wednesday 1 November 2017

Second internal deadline for UCAS applications to be submitted to Mr Sturman

Friday 23 November 2017

Applications which were submitted to Mr Sturman on or before 1 November will be submitted to UCAS

Friday 1 December 2017

Third internal deadline for UCAS applications to be submitted to Mr Sturman

Friday 15 December 2017

Applications which were submitted to Mr Sturman on or before 1 December will be submitted to UCAS

Friday 15 December 2017

Fourth and final internal deadline for UCAS applications to be submitted to Mr Sturman

Thursday 11 January 2018

The final applications which were submitted to Mr Sturman on or before 15 December will be submitted to UCAS

Monday 15 January 2018 – 18:00 hours (UK time)

UCAS closing date. Last date for applications from UK and EU residents for all other courses to be received at UCAS and to be guaranteed equal academic consideration.

Early 2018

Apply for student finance.

Sunday 25 February 2018

Start of Extra

Saturday 24 March 2018 – 18:00 hours (UK time)

Deadline for receipt at UCAS of applications for Art & Design courses except those listed with a 15 January deadline. Go to course search tool at www.ucas.com to check application deadlines

Saturday 30 June 2018 – 18:00 hours (UK time)

Last date for receipt of applications for immediate consideration. After this students will enter Clearing

Wednesday 4 July 2018

Extra closing date

Thursday 16 August 2018

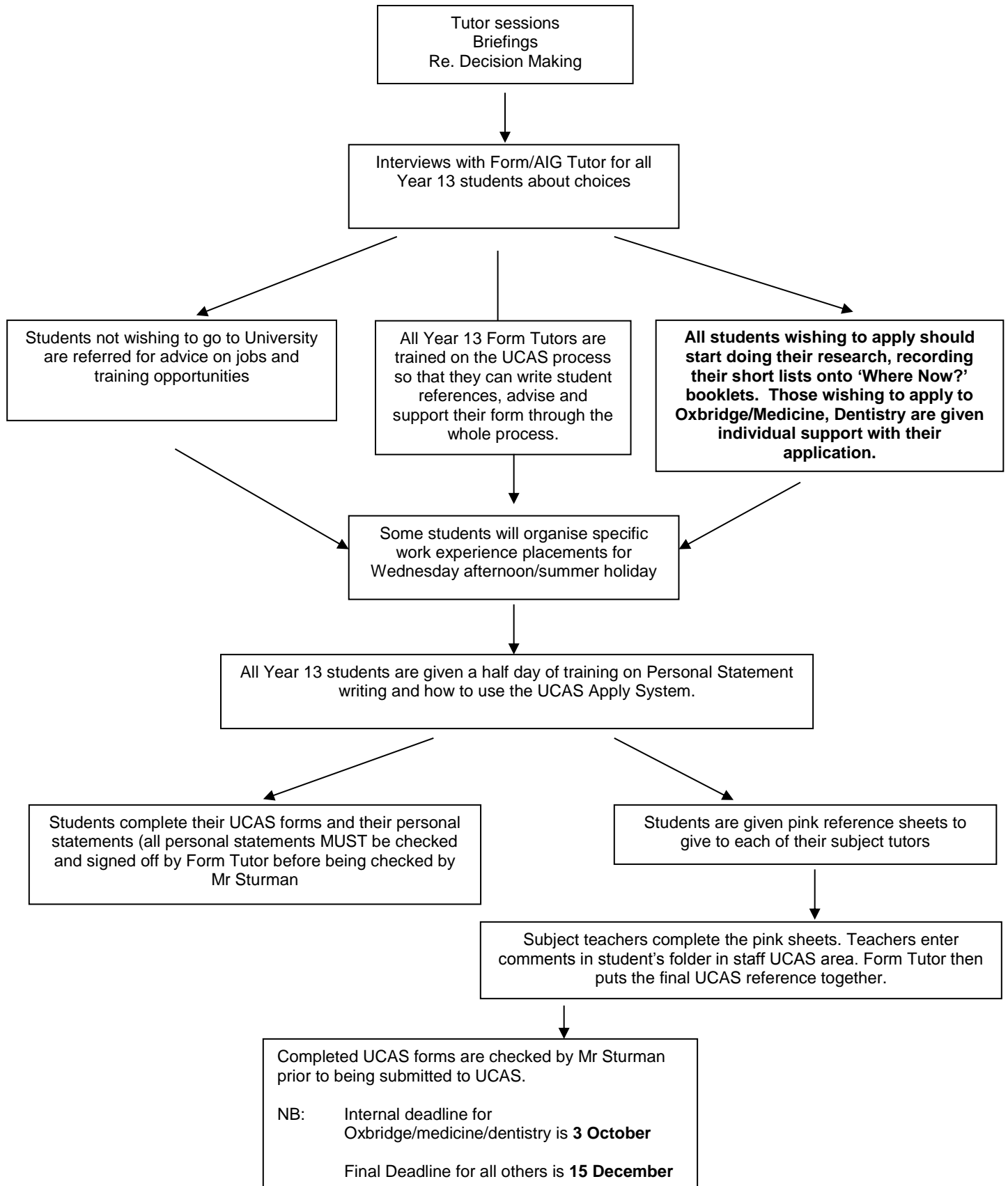
Results Day. Clearing and Adjustment period begin

Friday 31 August 2018

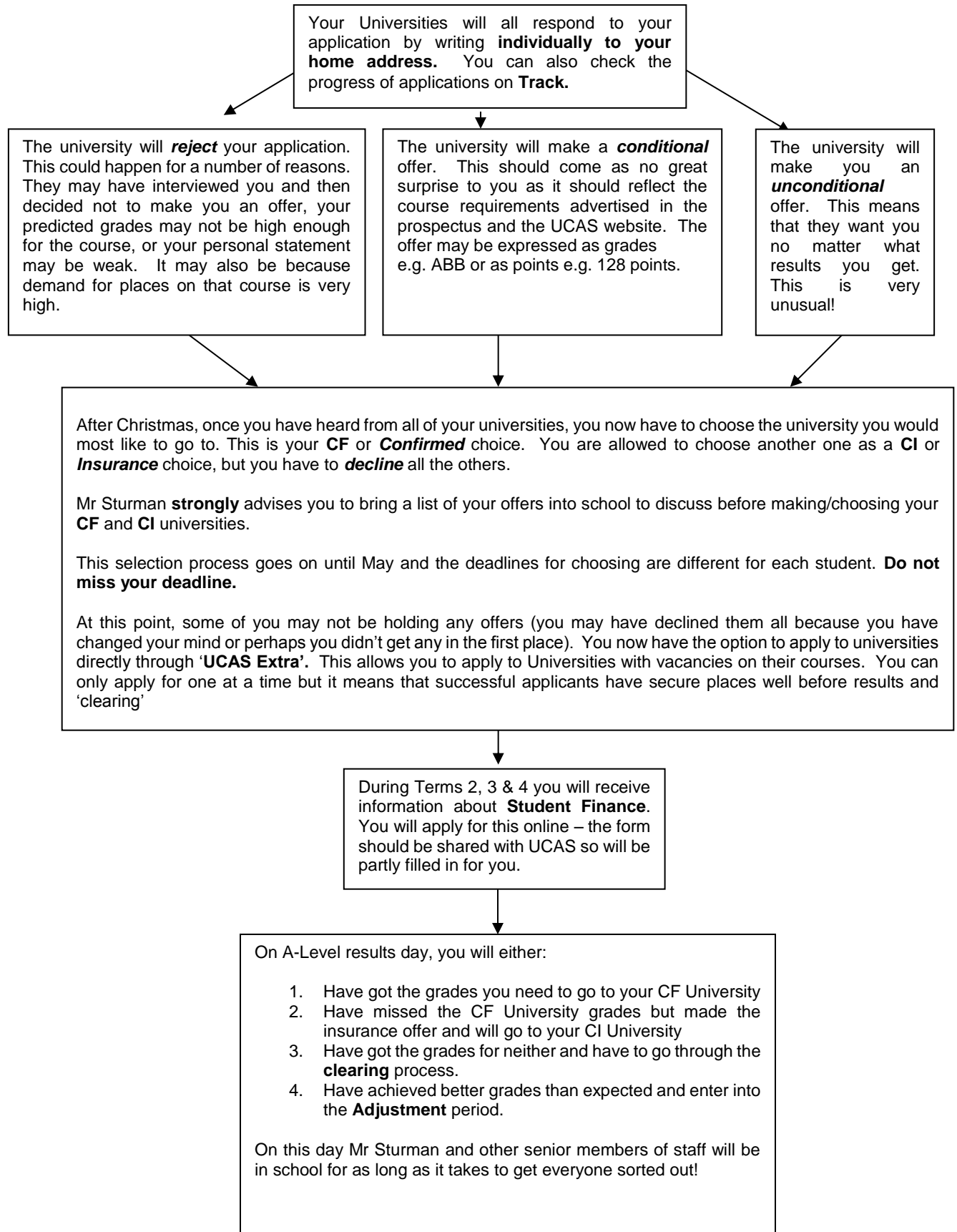
End of Adjustment and the deadline for any remaining conditions to be met – otherwise the university may not accept the applicant

The UCAS Application Process at Skegness Grammar School

Year 13



....After your application form has been sent to UCAS...



Your Form Tutor is skilled in guiding you with the Personal Statement. They have put this together – READ IT BEFORE YOU BEGIN!

The Form Tutor Easy Check List for Personal Statements

1. Make the student proof-read a hard-copy – most mistakes reaching Head of Sixth Form are typos, careless grammatical errors and spelling mistakes.
2. Refuse to mark it at all if there are any of the above contained in it.
3. Check for contradictions and repetitions – i.e. paragraphs that say the same thing, over use of certain phrases.
4. Watch out for overuse of thesaurus (!)
5. Watch out for hyperbole, exaggeration e.g. ‘From the moment I could talk, I have always expressed a deep passion for computer software’.
6. There absolutely **MUST** be something about why they are applying for that subject (i.e. not just ‘I enjoy it’). This is the most important part of the statement. If the subject/course is well-researched it will immediately show in the Personal Statement.
7. Try to get them to see subjects as more than just A level courses – e.g. History is not just a syllabus.
8. If they are applying to a Premier League University, they will need to show real academic interest outside the classroom.
9. Get them to leave out descriptions of the course; Admissions Tutors know what the course is!
10. Any experience pre-Post 16 is irrelevant, unless it is something absolutely pertinent to the application.
11. Question tutees about their hobbies if they surprise you – they must not lie – they’ll be found out in interview.
12. Watch for over-reliance on exemplar Personal Statements. Admissions Tutors are more than familiar with these. Remind them that the rules of plagiarism still count!!
13. Work Experience is only relevant if it throws light on their personal qualities, or displays a generic skill that may be useful for their chosen degree.
14. Don’t let them be flippant or pretentious, it comes across badly.
15. Watch ‘gimmicky’ opening sentences, many Admissions Tutors are traditional and will find them annoying.
16. Don’t let them say ‘I learnt many skills from’ Unless they can identify what they are.
17. Some interests and experiences are just not relevant – use common sense (e.g. the experience for going on holiday to Ibiza with your mates when you are applying to Med School)

PERSONAL STATEMENTS

What is a Personal Statement?

It is your chance to shine and stand out from the other applicants. You can write about yourself, your responsibilities and experiences with the aim of bringing your UCAS application to life. Your personal statement should take a bit of time to write as the good ones require thought and high-quality composition. There should also be time for others to read it over and suggest tips, correct grammar, spelling and syntax. You will need to show you have put some thought into what higher education is for and what it will give you. For example, this might be:

- a broader knowledge
- networking opportunities
- chance to meet people from around the country and around the world
- resources and facilities such as well-equipped laboratories, libraries, academic support and campus life
- Other things to consider might be: are you ready to be responsible, independent, work hard, get involved, discuss theories with academics, and take advantage of what that university is offering to enhance both your intellect and student life?

Who reads it?

Generally, your personal statement will be read by both the Admissions Team staff and the relevant faculty. They will use the personal statement to determine your potential. They will also have the responsibility to determine whether both the course and the university will benefit from your presence. They will examine:

- your suitability
- your qualifications
- your personal qualities such as communication skills
- your commitment
- your aptitude and ability to cope with pressure
- your interest and knowledge of the subject and how deep that extends
- whether you are ready to adapt to the university environment
- whether you are suitably inquisitive and open-minded

Admissions Officers read many personal statements so what can you do to make yours stand out? First off, do not annoy them with a poorly structured composition which is confusing. Also, ensure the reasons you wish to study with them are clear and apparent. Be sure to express your commitment. They are likely to be more interested in their subject areas than in you alone. Impress them with your knowledge on the subject which proves you are genuinely interested. Both the start and ending of your personal statement should be interesting and influential. You could start with an interesting comment about your chosen subject. Most importantly avoid clichés!

Writing process

Aim: Remember what you are working towards and outline how you want to achieve this. You can start by putting some ideas down on scrap paper or use diagrams if you work better that way.

Outline: Consider what the Admissions Officer needs to read and how you would like to have it look on paper. Talk about how the course interests you, and how your past work relates to the program. You might mention when you first felt this field would suit you as well as subject knowledge you have gained. Do you have any first-hand experience of the field? If so, mention it in your statement. Most of the statement should reflect your commitment and interest to the course. However, you should certainly save a little space for anything interesting or out-of-the-ordinary that you do such as sports, hobbies, musical instruments, special achievement awards and any other talents. You might also mention any positions of responsibility that you have held. This might be a job or volunteering or being captain of a sports team. Do not forget to expand on your experience so that it is clear what you have gained.

Introduction: This should be a sensible link into the areas you wish to touch upon in the statement. Try to make this interesting and reflect the writing style and tone you will carry through to the conclusion.

Body: Here you will deal with the individual issues and supporting factors. Remember to expand your points just enough to show how you were influenced, or what you gained.

Conclusion: This is where you summarise/restate/reword the main points of your statement in the briefest manner. You may wish to end with a strong final statement or comment.

Proofreading and revising: You have no excuses for errors. This is a product that is meant to represent you when you produce your finest work (same as a CV). Go through spell-check and review grammar. Ensure your facts are correct and that the statement flows in a logical manner. Remove anything that does not seem to add to your case. Be positive and aware of word repetition. Try reading it aloud to yourself. Do not worry about asking your parents, tutors and careers advisers for help as well.

DO:

- explain problems or failings in your background as it might make a difference if your perfect grades dipped for a short time due to a bad bout of flu before exams.
- discuss your visit to campus and what you enjoyed; what is unique and special about the university and/or the course. This indicates you have put thought into your choice.
- use appropriate grammar, punctuation, language and format and avoid repetition of words.
- consider the use of topical references relating to your subject. Mention any subject-related journals and publications that you read if appropriate. If you are not aware of any, spend some time looking them up to increase your understanding.
- keep a copy of what you submit for reference in case it is lost or you are called to an interview.

DON'T:

- get too bogged down in detail or alternately be too brief.
- write only what you think they want you to say as it will not sound genuine. Show your personality.
- use clichés like “I want to be a nurse so that I can help people!”
- repeat info already in your application (like “I am applying to study French with History”)
- speculate flamboyantly on how your career will progress and how you will change the world.
- copy/plagiarise your statement (in its entirety or in sections). This can be detected by Admissions or through the use of specialist software. HE is a small world and your reputation may be affected.
- come across as if you are making excuses and complaining about your school or other.
- lecture, preach or appear immovable in your opinions as university is an opportunity to question, learn more and gain a rounded perspective to your study.
- claim accomplishments that you cannot prove.
- say you chose the university purely by ranking or the subject purely to make money.
- simply list your accomplishments without explaining how they affected you.

FAQ

What if I want to be really creative and original in my personal statement?

Guidelines are only meant to steer you in the right direction. It is up to you the level of creativity, research and effort that you put in to this project. Above all, it is a representation of you and it should reflect your own voice. Highlight your uniqueness, be interesting (not quirky).

Should I mention my gap year plans?

Certainly, but explain effectively why you are taking the gap year and what you will be doing. Try to draw attention to how the gap year will help you on your course or in university generally.

How do I address applying for different subjects in my personal statement?

This is trickier, but the best thing to do is focus on where the fields of study are similar and highlighting the skills that are needed by both. You may find you need to avoid mentioning the subject directly.

EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL STATEMENTS

(don't copy!)

ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

I am applying for a degree in Accounting as I believe this degree will set me in good stead for my future career. In recent years I have become interested in the world of commerce and industry and I believe that studying this subject at university level will help me reach my goal of becoming an accountant. I have researched this career and believe that I have the necessary skills to succeed.

At my college, all year 12 students undertake a week's work experience in July. I arranged for mine to be at (company name), a small accountancy firm in my local town. During this week I learned that there are several elements of the accountancy profession and that the career is very diverse. Phillips and Woodstock specialise in helping small businesses with their tax assessments, and as a result I have become particularly interested in the business consultancy side of accounting. The MD, Mr Phillips was impressed with my work and commitment and has invited me to work at the firm part-time in my summer holidays. I am looking forward to the opportunity to gain more experience in my chosen career.

I am currently studying towards a BTEC National Diploma in Business (Management). The modules I have most enjoyed are 'Managing Information' and 'Managing a Business Project or an Event'. For the latter module my project was based on a tender by a construction company where I took the role of estimator and tried to write a competitive tender proposal. This was a challenging and interesting task, and one which taught me the importance of expertise in a chosen field. However it was the unit 'Introduction to Accounting' which I most enjoyed and which, in retrospect, first sparked my interest in accounting.

I have a part-time job in a roadside restaurant near to my home. Although the job can be repetitive, it has been an important exercise in self-discipline as I start work at 7am on Saturdays! I have also met many new people and become friends with some of the regulars. I try to save the money I earn from this job: university has been my long-term goal for the last year and my savings should help with the costs of studying.

I am really looking forward to going to university: partly for the social experience, but most importantly to further my studies in accounting. I believe that university will help me achieve my aim of qualifying as an accountant and perhaps one day running my own business, like Mr Phillips, or my all-time hero, Sir Alan Sugar. I would hope, however, never to be fired!

Strengths

- The first sentence goes straight to the point. This implies decisiveness and commitment, and the personal statement is too short for a lengthy introduction.
- The student goes into a lot of detail about the work experience, which is good as it is relevant to his chosen subject and helped shape his career plans.

Weaknesses

- It is a shame that the student did not go into more detail about the 'Introduction to Accounting' module, and explain how it sparked their interest in accounting, as this would be very relevant to his university application.
- The ending would have had more impact without the closing comment. Try to avoid flippant comments or cultural references, as admissions tutors may not understand them or share your interest in them.

NURSING

From an early age I took an interest in the health service having visited doctors and hospitals on many occasions. I admired the devotion and altruism of nurses who went further than just treating the patient, by genuinely wanting to make the patient as happy as possible in a difficult time. This really inspired me to want to do the same and help people, and the natural progression was to study Nursing at university.

I have really enjoyed studying Biology and Sports Science at A-Level, learning more about the fascinating human body. Biology has especially provided me with a good grounding on which to develop my knowledge and skills when studying Nursing at degree level. I have enjoyed all of my modules taken so far, in particular mental health which I can focus on in my chosen degrees.

As much as I appreciate the theoretical work which is essential to gather a good grounding of the course, I am really looking forward to the clinical work in placement. I relish the opportunity to work in a natural environment where I can develop both my nursing and caring skills and work with a range of people. From previous voluntary work undertaken, I have experience working with people in distressing times. Through Millennium Volunteers I used to visit care homes and spend time with elderly people who often didn't have anybody else. It was very rewarding as I realised a few hours of my time meant so much to these people. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme which I have completed bronze, silver and gold awards in, has been a great experience - meeting new people, learning new skills and developing my abilities. Here I have undertaken other awards such as first aid training which again I hope provides me with some understanding which may help my studies. Apart from voluntary work I have many interests - I am a keen sports fan and play netball regularly and swim. I also have violin lessons and have played in the school orchestra for many years, participating in many concerts in and out of school.

I feel that with a basic understanding and being a committed and determined individual I can successfully progress in this challenging discipline and bring a lot to the course and the university.

Strengths

- A good background of interests and activities has been provided.
- The student has shown knowledge of and enthusiasm for the practical element of a Nursing degree.
- The student has written an enthusiastic final sentence that will appeal to admissions tutors.

Weaknesses

- Although the student talks about her A-levels, voluntary work and other activities, she hasn't discussed the skills gained from them.
- The student has mentioned a particular interest in mental health nursing but more information could have been given about this.

SPORTS SCIENCE

I have always wanted a career in sport. Since taking A-level Sports Science my eyes have been opened to the opportunities that are available at undergraduate level. Detailed research has confirmed that a degree in Sports Science will provide me with a solid understanding of the biology, physiology and psychology required to succeed in my chosen discipline.

I am fascinated by the various methods used to assess and measure physical activity and the changes in physiology that result from exercise and training. Last summer I attended a residential sports science summer school at my local university. We had various taster sessions with academics and I thoroughly enjoyed all of them. I was particularly fascinated by the Human Performance Unit because it was jam-packed with the latest gear. We were shown how all the different apparatus worked and were allowed to carry out tests using some of the more basic pieces. I also heard talks from current students and they really made me realise that I would fit into student life easily.

Sport is obviously very important to me and I do get involved both in and out of school. I play hockey at county-level and will want to continue when I reach university. I am also eager to become involved in new sports and will enjoy helping to run clubs as I feel I have a lot of knowledge and experience to share. Football is also strong a passion of mine and I have recently been selected to assist with coaching the youth team at my town club. I am looking forward to working with children as I know that I will gain lots of new skills.

I have a part-time job as a retail assistant in a leisure wear shop. I really enjoy helping customers and advising them on the most appropriate clothing and equipment. I am also responsible for the tills at the end of the day and am often trusted to close the shop. I would consider myself to be an excellent communicator and I also possess good time-keeping skills; I hate being late for anything! I know that both these attributes will stand me in good stead for academic life.

I am so determined to become a student, studying the subject that I love. I know that I will put every effort into making the most of my time, both academically and socially.

Strengths

- It is good to mention any previous experience of visiting universities, e.g. summer school or A-level conference, as this demonstrates keen interest to the admissions tutor.
- This student backs up their interest in sport through a lot of extra-curricular involvement, which will be impressive to the admissions tutor.

Weaknesses

- Although this student is clearly focused on the subject and has a sporting interest which is very important for his chosen subject area, they fail to present themselves as a well-rounded person and is also slightly vague about what their career in sport will be.
- The final statement is slightly weak and would have been more effective if the student had summed up by re-iterating the reasons why they are looking forward to going to university to study Sports Science.

BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE

When I was twelve years old the car that my mother was driving was hit by lorry. Thankfully she recovered from the accident but only because she had a blood transfusion. Since that dreadful day I have aimed for a career in transfusion science because without skilled biomedical scientists, the blood transfusion service would collapse. With such a clear focus on my chosen career, I have been able to do extensive research into the skills and attributes that a biomedical scientist must possess. I am focused and determined, and am both accurate and efficient. These skills are essential because patient's lives and the treatment of illnesses depend upon me. I am also confident that my choice of

A- and AS-levels, Biology, Chemistry, Psychology and Maths, will provide me with the solid foundation needed to proceed to undergraduate level.

The practical side of biology and chemistry has enabled me to gain good laboratory skills and I am eager to acquire more developed and sophisticated techniques at university. Maths has helped me to think logically and to develop my understanding of numerical information. Psychology has improved my written communication skills, which I believe to be important for any subject at university.

Throughout my school career I have enjoyed positions of considerable responsibility. I was nominated form captain four years running and elected Head Girl during my final year. This was a demanding job as I was required to represent the school at prestigious events and do a lot of public speaking (something which used to scare me greatly). At our GCSE prize giving I received prizes for biology and maths. I was also awarded the Stubbs Cup which I am extremely proud of.

I love spending time in the country walking my greyhounds Mollie and Vinnie. I have taken Mollie to many open shows and am hoping to present her at her first championship show this Christmas.

Showing and caring for dogs involves discipline and attention to detail. It is also a great way to socialise as I am constantly meeting new faces at the weekly club I attend. I can't wait to start university because I will get the opportunity to meet people from all over the world.

When I'm not walking the dog's I can be found in the gym. I like keeping fit and look forward to trying new sports and activities at university. I have also recently started

working at the gym in their crèche. I enjoy working with children and have attained my first aid certificate.

I think that being a biomedical scientist will be a rewarding career because I will be doing work that will help improve people's health and cure diseases. University has been my goal for a long time now and I look forward to the challenge ahead of me.

Strengths

- This student clearly states the skills that she has gained from her A-level subjects.
- She has written an enthusiastic final sentence that will appeal to admissions tutors.

Weaknesses

- There are a couple of silly grammar mistakes (incorrect use of possessive apostrophe) that looks bad.
- This student does not explain why they were awarded the Stubbs Cup. Details like this will support your application.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

My interest in linguistics has grown from my first year of sixth form when I took a course in English Language. During this course, I studied the work of Trudgill. I found this particularly interesting as I enjoyed looking at how and why the social class of a person affects how they speak. I also found the gender and language issues relating to how males and females approach language in a different manner very interesting. I have a general interest in sociology and look forward to combining this with my interests in linguistics.

Last summer I spent a month in Spain where I worked as a teaching assistant in a local school. Working in a foreign country allowed me to experience life where I did not completely understand the language used around me. It became clear that language is an essential tool used everyday for communication. This opportunity allowed me to see language being used in different environments and I now want to understand how languages are used and how they work.

During my time at school I have been actively involved with the netball team, working my way to becoming captain last year. Being involved in the team has allowed me to develop my communication and time-management skills, along with motivating the rest of my team. I really enjoy volunteering and once a week I help younger students to learn Spanish. After my undergraduate degree I plan to study a PGCE as I would like to become a secondary school teacher of Spanish. I believe that volunteering will allow me to learn skills which will help me with this career path.

I have also been the Managing Director of a Young Enterprise company which won two awards for quality and best product at the local awards evening. Our company has also been selected to attend the regional awards later this month. From this interesting experience I learnt a lot about how the real world works and I worked incredibly hard to achieve my highest potential and compete successfully.

As well as these school organised activities, I also work in the local supermarket. I have to relate to the customers and assist them in a variety of ways. I feel this has boosted my confidence and improved my inter-personal skills both of which I think will help me in the transition from sixth form to university. I believe that studying linguistics at university will expand my knowledge of language, which I know will be essential in my future career. I look forward to setting myself new challenges and building upon my existing experience, which will hopefully help me to achieve my ambition of becoming a successful teacher.

Strengths

- This statement shows that the student has put thought into their long-term career goal. Although this is not essential and often not possible, it does demonstrate focused thought.
- This student draws attention to the skills she has developed through being involved in her activities (hockey, Young Enterprise, part-time job), which is effective as the skills she mentions will be useful at university.

Weaknesses

- This student has used the words 'interest'/'interesting' five times in the first paragraph. It is essential, especially for a subject like English Language, to demonstrate a wide vocabulary.
- More could have been made of her Spanish skills; it is important not to under sell yourself.

LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

My aspiration to study law is firmly rooted in my interest in world events and with my desire to help others.

Law affects our everyday lives, almost without us noticing. The news always features an aspect of law up for debate. Ethical issues are often brought to the forefront on topics such as animal testing, abortion and gay rights. I find these debates absolutely fascinating and the complexity of law continues to astound me.

I have always maintained an independent, self-motivated approach to my academic studies. Having studied a broad range of AS and A-level subjects, I feel I have acquired a strong selection of skills: from Mathematics and Philosophy I have learnt the art of questioning the world around us and developing a keen sense of intellectual curiosity; from English Language and General Studies I have understood the importance of expressing myself clearly and concisely through words; whilst from ICT I have developed a solid understanding of an area which is playing an increasingly important role in today's society.

I have spent time in the public galleries of both the local County Court and High Court. I am fascinated by the processes that take place and my long-term ambition is to play an integral role in the court room.

In November I am due to shadow a district judge for a week, giving valuable insight into the day to day workings of the job. I built upon my initial interest by keenly reading *The Law Machine* by Marcel Berlins and Clare Dyer; it provided me with a firm grounding in the essential principles of the British legal system and highlighted its apparent weaknesses.

To gain a different perspective of the law I had the chance to take a work experience placement with a local solicitor's firm. My work evolved from basic administrative duties,

such as filing, faxing and answering telephone calls, into accompanying solicitors to court and liaising with barristers on behalf of the firm. The opportunity to work alongside people who have dedicated their lives to the law has strengthened my decision to study this challenging discipline.

A keen passion of mine is debating and I have represented my school in various competitions. In year eleven I was a member of the winning team in the Rotary Youth Speaks final for East Anglia. Our presentation - Is it ever justifiable to execute criminals? - was given a special award of distinction. I was appointed senior prefect at my school this year and it is a position which I take great pride in. It involves helping to maintain discipline amongst the younger pupils during lunch-breaks and representing the school at various events.

In my spare time I like to swim and play netball. Although I do not play at a recognised level, I would be very keen to continue them as hobbies when I reach university. I understand the importance of having a good balance between work and play and I am confident that I would make the most of my time as a student. I believe that my ability to motivate myself is a key factor in my overall success. I am an extremely hardworking person and I am committed to reaching my goals. I believe I can contribute a genuine passion and enthusiasm for reading law and I thank you for taking the time to consider my application.

Strengths

- Work experience is something which admissions tutors notice, especially for a competitive degree such as Law.
- Debating experience is also very relevant for this subject area.

Weaknesses

- A spelling mistake in the first line will not impress. You must proof read carefully.
- You do not need to thank admissions tutors at the end of your personal statement; this looks like you are being creepy!

UNIVERSITY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Advance preparation:

- This is an opportunity to prepare any questions that you have not been able to answer from reading the prospectus or through other research. Be careful not to ask questions where little research would have revealed the answer. Do your research.
- Consider your dress (smart casual, but no trainers or jeans) and demeanour (speak clearly; maintain eye contact; positive body language) and look at the prospectus thoroughly. Being familiar with both the university and the course will show them your commitment to their university.
- Remember to review your personal statement, as you will probably be asked about what you have written.
- Mock interviewing with career advisors and/or parents will help. The idea of a mock interview is to help you prepare for questions you might get asked in the real interview, and to give you a feel for how an interview goes. It should make your real one a bit less daunting even if they are very different in practice.
- It is worthwhile researching topical information on the latest developments in your field. You may be asked for your opinion on these during the interview.
- Ensure you know when and where the interview is exactly. Find this out well in advance so you can plan how and when to arrive. Watch out for any details in your correspondence about what you can expect when you arrive. You may be expected to go on a tour or have a lunch *etc.*
- Get plenty of sleep the night before so you feel refreshed and ready for your interview.
- Arrive early allowing for traffic. Take the university's details with you to contact in the event of a problem or delay.
- Turn your mobile off in advance as a ringing mobile could make a terrible impression.

Typical university interview questions:

General questions

Here interviewers are assessing your character, nature and self-awareness to get a measure of your subject knowledge and other interests. Try to answer with relevance to the course and university ethos as you are able. Be confident with your responses and give examples. Avoid babbling and sweeping generic statements. Aim to appear well rounded with a wide range of interests, knowledge and skills such as IT ability, public speaking and languages can be useful here.

- 1)** Tell me about yourself? How would you describe yourself? What are you best at? What are your main interests? *What do you get out of them?* Describe the interests listed on your personal statement in more detail? *How do you relax? What do you consider yourself good at doing? What motivates you? Where do you see yourself in five years time? Why should we take you? What practical skills have you acquired? What are your career plans, if any? What qualities do you possess to follow that career?*
- 2)** Are you good at working on your own? What opportunities have you had for exercising leadership? Describe a situation where you were put under pressure? How did you react? What was the outcome? What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? Tell me an achievement of which you are proud. *Describe how you typically approach a project. How do you manage your day? How do you organise your time and assess your priorities? What has responsibility taught you?*
- 3)** *Are you satisfied with your academic achievements to date? How would your tutor describe your work? How would a friend describe you? What is your major achievement? How well do you work in a team? What team role(s) do you play? Give an example of how you have influenced a group.*
- 4)** What really interests you? What are you interested in reading? What was the last book you read? Why did you choose it? What is your favourite newspaper or periodical? Do you follow a particular columnist? Have you been abroad? Describe your most interesting experience.

Inspiration for your answers:

"I am a motivated and confident person. My preferred subjects are English and History, particularly anything related to the Elizabethan era. I am fascinated by the changes between the Tudor and Stuart monarchs and the impact it had on all aspects of Britain. In my spare time I enjoy playing rugby and skiing. I volunteer in a retirement home and during school holidays I work at my neighbours shop."

"I want to study geography as I found that studying this at A level was very enjoyable and would like to take this study further."

"I particularly like the structure of this university course because of....."

"A recent (project, field trip, book I read etc) confirmed my interest/enthusiasm for...."

Motivation questions

Why do you want to study for a degree? How do you think you will benefit from a university education? What do you think university can offer you? What else, apart from study, interests you about university? Why do you want to study at **this** university? What do you think you can offer this university? What do you believe to be the functions of a good university? What are your views on the funding of universities? How do you think universities should achieve a good social mix in their intake? *How did you choose your university? What will you do if you don't get a place? Why should we offer you a place? What else have you applied for? How involved will you be in university life? Do you have any questions for us?*

Subject related questions

Why have you chosen this department? What features of this course do you find attractive? Why do you want to study this subject? How would you define your subject? Why is your subject important? What are the most important current developments in your subject? What have you most enjoyed at school? What do you dislike about school? What do you know about the course? What attracts you to this course? *What do you see as the pros and cons of this career? What will you look forward to most in this job? In your view, what are the major problems/opportunities facing this industry/sector? Why did you select the subjects you studied for A Level? What do you like about them? How rewarding did you find them? What courses have you taken, other than A Levels, either at school or outside? What have you gained from them? What grades do you expect to get at A Level? What have you most enjoyed about school? What have you disliked? If you could change your course in any way, what would you change?*

Topical questions

You may be asked your opinion on something in the news or related to your subject. You should be prepared to give your opinion or express some knowledge or awareness. Start by reading major newspapers and subject related journals in advance. Be balanced in your responses by offering countering theories. You may also describe your preferred opinion as long as you can back it up reasonably.

Situational questions (sometimes hypothetical)

These may begin "give me an example of a time when"... you dealt with a problem, or overcame some obstacles, or worked in as team to achieve an outcome etc. They may also be "if you were asked to"....do something creative aboutwhat would you do? Take your time to answer and give a considered response. Show lateral thinking taking all factors into consideration where they can see you are weighing up ideas carefully.

Work experience/ gap year questions

This is a good opportunity to show what responsibility you have taken upon yourself and how you value your time as well as the experiences you chose to have. You can also show the interviewers your personal motivations. They may ask:

What positions of responsibility have you held? What work experience have you had? What did you learn from any work experience you've done? What qualities do you possess to follow your chosen career? Why are you taking a gap year? What are you planning to do on your gap year? How did you arrange it? How does it fit in with your career plans? What do you hope to achieve? Why have you decided not to take a gap year? Does not taking a gap year put you at a disadvantage in any way?

Other lines of questioning:

- Those that question your breadth of academic interest
- Those based on your application, personal statement, reference and/or portfolio
- Those based on special features of the University, the course or even the department that you are applying to
- Those that assess your academic potential and your use of intelligence
- "Wild card questions": abstract, nonsensical ones requiring you to "think outside the box". *E.x.* "why are manhole covers round", "which character from Star Wars would you be?", "what is language?", "would it be better to save the coral reef or the ozone layer?" "how do you organise a successful revolution?"

Useful Resources

Reference books – all available at Careers Library

The Guardian University Guide
Virgin Guide to British Universities
HEAP 2011
Getting Into...(Medicine, Dentistry, Physiotherapy, Art and Design, Psychology, Veterinary Science, Oxford and Cambridge)
Progression Series...(Medicine, Dentistry, Optometry, Law, Media and Performing Arts)
University Interviews Guide
Getting Into US and Canadian Universities
Your Gap Year

Websites

Going to University – these are a good starting point

www.ucas.com

www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationandLearning/index.htm

Compare University courses

www.unistats.com

www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/education/good_university_guide

www.guardian.co.uk/education/universityguide

University Applications

www.ucas.com

www.opendays.com

http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Category:Personal_Statements_by_Subject

www.skill.org.uk – for disabled students

www.studential.com

The website of the university to which you are applying may have tips as well such as

<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/>

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/cv/PersonalStatement.htm>

Student Finance

www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance

www.slc.co.uk – student loans

www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk – health related degree/diploma bursary information

Study Abroad

www.fulbright.co.uk – study in the US

www.britishcouncil.org/erasmus

www.acu.ac.uk

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