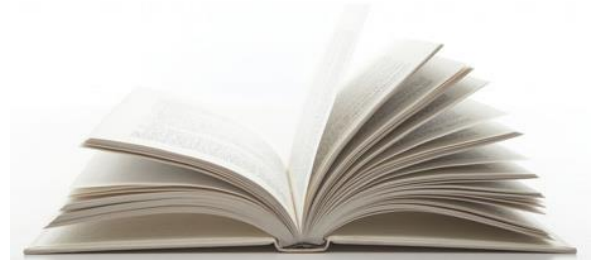


# UCAS GUIDE 2020

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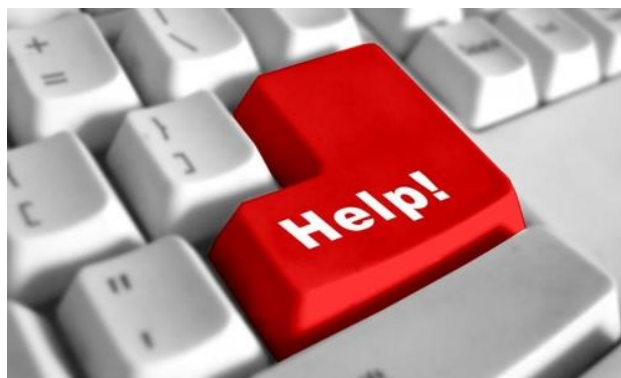
What's your next step?

UCAS information – making sense of it all

All about personal statements

Useful information

Student Finance



## What is your next step?

- Do you want to
- Do you want to
- Do you want to



- go to university?
- seek an apprenticeship?
- go straight to work?

It is important that you consider seriously the route to follow - otherwise you cannot be given the most appropriate advice and guidance. It may be difficult at this stage of your Post 16 career and you may not have a fully formed idea but please avail yourself of all the support mechanisms in place.

## **University – a few questions to consider.**



- Do you want to live locally?
- Do you want to move away from WGC?
- What sort of course interests you?
- Have you already decided a career? In which case your degree options may be limited.
- Have you looked at any prospectuses
- Have you looked at 'Choosing a course' at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)?
- Have you found any information on open days at [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com)?

## Gap Years – more questions to consider



- Where do you want to go?
- How will you fund the trip?
- How long do you want to go for?
- Will you want to go to university afterwards? (If so, you may wish to apply this year and defer your place)
- Have you contacted any Gap Year organisations? [www.gapyear.com](http://www.gapyear.com)

## Apprenticeships/Employment – again, more to ponder



- What field of work do you want to work in?
- Have you sought any advice from a careers advisor?

The important thing to realise is that when you return in September you have very little time to organise everything and really consider what you want to do. DO AS MUCH PREP AS YOU CAN OVER THE SUMMER – this will give you a head start.

# connexions

# UCAS Information – making sense of it all

## What is UCAS?



- The **U**niversity and **C**ollege **A**dmission **S**ervice
- It is the only way to apply to a university

## How does it work?

You will need to complete the UCAS online form (visit [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)), which is broken down into 4 main sections.

You will need a buzzword to enable you to apply through the school. This year the buzzword is **'lemsfordlaneAL8'**

### Personal Details

This section will ask you for information such as your date of birth, address, and previous exam results. You will have to list the awarding body when you put in your results, as well as individual modules, so it's worth finding out this information before you start.

### Choices

You can make 5 choices of universities and courses. They don't have to be listed in preferential order, as the universities do not see your other choices. More about how to choose your university and courses later.

### Personal Statement

Do not underestimate the power of a good personal statement. Spend time on writing it, and get as much help and guidance as possible. There is a section further on all about how to write a good personal statement, and why it's so important.

### An academic school reference

This is written by your tutor and contains statements from your subject teachers. Your tutor will also give your predicted grades. Your **predicted grades** are carefully considered, optimistic opinions of your potential achievement. You will be given an indication of your predicted grades in September.

**If you/your parent wishes to question a predicted grade- you must direct this to Mr Maidment only- DO NOT APPROACH SUBJECT STAFF- as they will simply redirect you to Mr Maidment.**

Once your reference is written it is passed to Mr Maidment for final approval and your form will be sent off to UCAS. Prior to sending each student will be shown their reference. You need to ensure that your reference is as glowing as possible. No negative statements will go into your reference but Universities will look for statements that are missing. You must ensure that I can write the following in your reference

**“ This student has excellent attendance/punctuality/has contributed to the wider life of the school/has undertaken relevant work experience/has involved themselves in charity and community projects etc”**

Do not apply for courses that are beyond your predicted grade range. Universities will only offer places to students who meet the course grade requirements. Should you exceed your expectations, UCAS has a system 'Adjustment' which will allow you to see what other options your new grades provide whilst holding your current offer.

## Choosing a course



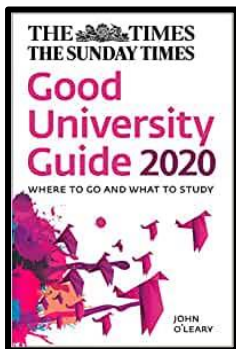
Your course option is the first vital step, as certain universities specialise in certain subjects. If you are unsure, go to [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) where you can search specifically by course. Speak to subject teachers, careers advisors, other students, look at the prospectuses in the study area and check out the websites listed at the back of this booklet.

You must decide whether you would like to study a single or a joint subject honours degree. You can search for dual honours on [ucas.com](http://ucas.com) by choosing the option to study something alongside your first subject.

If you already have a career in mind, find out what sort of degree will help you – studying the right degree for your final goal puts you ahead of the game and firmly on track to a good career.

Once you have picked your course, search the Universities that offer it. This can all be found on the UCAS website. Remember that offers differ from Uni to Uni – some offers are given depending on points, some on grades. If you are aware that the top grades you are likely to receive are nowhere near what they are asking for, don't waste one of your options.

Find out as much as you can about the course specific to that University. Check out their website and see what the course entails. Find out where the University is on the league tables for your specific subject and how that department fares in terms of excellence.



<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings>

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/ng-interactive/2019/jun/07/university-league-tables-2020>

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/best-universities/best-universities-uk>

Books such as 'The Sunday Times Good University Guide' are filled with useful information to help you decide.

Once you have completed your side of the application form, you will need to pay. The current prices are **£20** for a single choice and **£26** for between 2 and 5 choices. You will then send the completed application form to Mr Maidment, who will check through it and load your reference. He will let you know once it has been forwarded to UCAS, and you will be contacted by UCAS confirming they have received your application. Keep checking back to see if you have been given any offers, interviews, or declines.



## Oxbridge candidates

Be aware that your application needs to be submitted by **Oct 15<sup>th</sup>**. The Oxbridge universities base their teaching on the tutorial system which means more individual attention tailored to your learning needs. Tutorials give you an opportunity to discuss your subject with an eminent thinker. In addition to tutorials in college, students also share lectures and classes in their department. Thus the Oxbridge system combines the best of one to one teaching in college with unmatched resources.

In some cases an interview is the only means of additional assessment, in others you may be asked to send in one or two school essays or take a further test either before or during interview (depending on subject).

Clearly, studying at Oxbridge is prestigious and valued highly by employers. It is an opportunity for you to develop your passion for a subject and extend your skills of autonomous learning. We would advise students to certainly submit an application but be aware of the extremely competitive nature of Oxbridge courses. You have to be dedicated to getting there, but ready to adjust should you be unsuccessful.

It is likely that if you are a potential applicant you will have spoken to staff / attended the Oxbridge evening / undertaken research about applying.

### NOTE TO MEDICAL, DENTAL AND VETERINARY SCIENCE APPLICANTS

You will have to sit the UK clinical aptitude test (UKCAT). You can only sit this test once, so preparation is vital. At the back of this booklet is a list of helpful websites, you will find one relating to this test there, also check the Important Dates table to find out when the deadlines are relating to UKCAT tests. The deadline for your application is also **15<sup>th</sup> October**

### **What happens next?**

Some students may be invited for an interview. You will then wait for offers to arrive from all of your universities- this can take some months, but most are usually through by the end of April. The official deadline is May 8<sup>th</sup>, so if you are still awaiting an offer then, you need to contact UCAS.

From the offers made, you must accept a firm offer and an insurance offer, and when the results come out in August the universities will decide whether they accept you or not,



## **What happens if you do not achieve their offer grades?**

If you do not achieve your firm offer grades, the university makes the decision as to whether to accept you or not. If you are rejected, you will automatically be given your insurance offer (as long as you meet those grades). If you do not meet the insurance offer and the university does not accept you. You will be put into **clearing**.

## **What is clearing?**

Clearing is the system which sorts spare university places. It takes place immediately after results and involves students contacting universities directly. It is therefore essential that you are not on holiday when the results come out in case you have to deal with clearing.

## **Personal statements**



Many universities don't interview applicants, so the only information they have about you is your UCAS form. The bits they are most interested in are your grades, your references and your personal statement. The personal statement is the only bit you really have control over, so this is your chance to present a good image to the admissions tutor, even if your grades don't really reflect that image. If you are applying to an oversubscribed university course, and everyone applying is likely to have good grades, your personal statement is the only thing that tells you apart from other applicants, so you want to try and make yours as good as you possibly can. Your statement must state how much you want to study the course. Universities are looking for committed students who will finish the course and contribute positively to the university. They are looking for students who demonstrate an interest in the wider world but most of all are passionate about the subject they wish to study at degree level

You will need to complete a spider diagram first, on which you write down everything about you that you have ever done. If it's not there, it doesn't exist, and as far as the universities are concerned, you haven't done it.

1. **The first paragraph** should be a statement about the subject you want to study and you should give reasons for wanting to study this subject, whilst suggesting your involvement with it. You should aim for it to sound dynamic, rather than even hinting that there could be anything else in the world other than your subject for you.
2. **The second paragraph** should begin by outlining any relevant work experience for your subject, background reading or related experience, which will support your application to study this subject. Here you may wish to comment on your other 'A' Level subjects which support your chosen area of study.

3. **Any other examinations passed** may come in here, or they may be included in the following paragraph, depending on what they are. Comments will need to accompany such statements.
4. **Positions of responsibility**, involvement in school life – anything you may wish to mention as part of your experience at school.
5. School organised **work experience** could come here if not already referred to, along with any other work and the responsibilities involved.
6. Your **hobbies and interests** outside school, sports activities and anything else that makes you an individual needs to be mentioned here. It could be incorporated into point 5
7. You need to **end on a definite, positive note with a comment about the course.** If you are taking a year out, say in broad terms why, and how you plan to spend it
8. **You will only have 47 lines and 95 characters.** Type using Verdana text, as this gives more words per line.

**70 % of your personal statement should refer directly to the course you are applying to.**



# Personal Statements

Some things to remember.....

<b><u>DO</u></b>	<b><u>Don't</u></b>
Tell us which course you wish to study	Be tempted to lie!
Be confident	Be too self-assured...
Get it proof read	Make mistakes and spelling errors
Talk about Extra Curricular Activities	Talk for the length of the page about football
Talk about things that reflect your personality	Just list your hobbies and interests
Discuss relevant skills you've learnt from work experience	Just list your places of work
Structure the content of the statement	Be tempted to waffle
Tell us about your subject choice	Talk about your interest in different degree areas
Tell us about career aims	Tell us about unrelated goals
Tell us which areas of the subject you are most looking forward to studying	Just make things up about areas you have not researched!
Get the whole form done by the deadline	Leave it till the last minute or hand it in late!
Make it interesting!	Try to be a comedian

# Improving a Personal Statement

## Part One:

### The '**Before**' Version

The following student has written a personal statement to support an application to read History. It is an early draft which needs improving.

I enjoy History lessons so I have decided to pursue the subject at degree level. At University I look forward to examining a range of historical sources. I am particularly interested in French history, and trips to France have broadened my historical awareness.

As a school prefect I hold many responsibilities; organising and attending school functions, delivering speeches to the school body, being an active member of the school council, working effectively with other students. Having played in school concerts with the keyboard orchestra when I was in year nine, I have recently taken up piano lessons.

I am a keen sports player and I am a member of the school hockey team, netball team, the athletics squad and the volleyball team, earning me "Sports Personality of the Year" award.

I have taught information technology skills to younger students and helped a particular student to overcome language difficulties. I have organised sports days and Christmas parties for the elderly; and written, directed and performed a series of short plays.

I have always enjoyed reading but more recently my 'A' level studies have enabled me to explore foreign literature.

Currently, I am involved in the European Youth Parliament Competition in which I will be representing the United Kingdom in Cyprus. This venture enhanced my general knowledge (specifically of genetic engineering and drug legislation)

# Improving a Personal Statement

## Part Two: The 'After' Version

The following student has improved their personal statement from the earlier draft.

I have always been fascinated by the past, beginning with childhood interests in time-travel and mythology. This interest continued with student exchanges to France and Germany which gave me the opportunity to study 18<sup>th</sup> century French history and dictatorship and to widen my historical scope. A trip to France, where I studied issues relating to the World Wars, confirmed my interest in History and my decision to pursue the subject at degree level. At university I look forward to analysing varied interpretations of history and the original sources upon which they are based.

As a school prefect I have held many responsibilities such as organising school events, delivering speeches and participating actively on the school council. This experience has taught me to use my own initiative and developed my skills of public speaking and diplomacy.

I also involve myself fully with the school music performances. Having played in concerts with the keyboard orchestra, I have recently taken up piano lessons and gained a wider awareness of music, especially of Debussy and romanticism.

Playing in various school sports teams has earned me several awards including that of 'Sports Personality of the Year', and taught me the importance of communication, teamwork and self-reliance. Organising a series of plays and other events for the elderly was a fulfilling challenge. I also found that the experience of assisting younger pupils with IT and language development was extremely rewarding.

I have always enjoyed reading, but more recently my A level studies have enabled me to explore foreign literature. Brecht is particularly absorbing for his insight into the way people attempt to overcome the horrors of war.

Currently, I am helping to produce a film for the European Student Travel Company concerning the career opportunities for young people in Europe. Also, I represented my school at a national selection conference for the European Youth Parliament. This venture not only enhanced my general knowledge, but improved my teamwork, language and debating skills, which will be particularly useful for my course at university.

## Sponsorship for Higher Education



### **What is sponsorship?**

Sponsorship provides financial assistance whilst you are a student and sometimes provides work during the holidays.

### **Who gives sponsorship?**

Industrial companies  
Government departments  
The armed service  
Charitable organisations  
Universities on behalf of employers  
The three armed forces  
Professional Bodies e.g. the Institute of Mechanical Engineers



### **Benefits**

Money – probably an annual bursary plus good rates of pay when working.  
Training  
Meaningful work experience to boost your CV  
Chance of future employment  
Help with final-year project work  
Understanding of what it means to work in industry  
Chance to gain new skills

### **Disadvantages**

Your holiday time is not your own  
You only have the chance to see one company whilst working  
You make a vocational choice at 18 but you may change your mind. You may be obliged to work for a company because of a payback clause. You have to work in locations a long way from home that are not appealing.

Check out – [www.uksponsorship.com](http://www.uksponsorship.com)

## Types of Universities and Courses

Some universities have formed groups through which they share ideas and resources regarding issues and procedures in the higher education sector. The groups below work to improve the higher education system and share best practice methods.

The following descriptions of each group have been taken from statements provided on their websites.

### 1994 Group



UNIVERSITY OF  
**BATH**

UNIVERSITY OF  
**EXETER**

Extract taken from a policy statement, which is available on the 1994 Group website:

"The 1994 Group represents nineteen of the UK's most research-intensive and internationally renowned universities. The 1994 Group's mission is to promote excellence in research and teaching. Seeking to promote excellence in the student experience is therefore at the very heart of what we do. Each member institution delivers an extremely high standard of education to its students, demonstrating excellence in teaching and academic support, and providing learning in a research-rich community."

### Million+



Middlesex  
University



LONDON SOUTH BANK  
UNIVERSITY

Extracts taken from the Million + website:

"We are a university think-tank. This means we work to help solve complex problems in higher education and to ensure that policy reflects the potential of the UK's world-class university system."

"Our member institutions pride themselves on diversity, flexibility and opportunity: each has its own specialities, qualities and principles, but together they provide a network of institutions that truly promote aspiration, excellence and innovation."

### The Russell Group



Extracts taken from The Russell Group website:

"The Russell Group is an association of leading UK research-intensive universities committed to maintaining the highest standards of research, education and knowledge transfer. The members of The Russell Group have the quality and strengths to compete successfully in the global market place for research, skills, expertise and training."

"The aims and objectives of The Russell Group are to promote the interests of universities in which teaching and learning are undertaken within a culture of research excellence, and to identify and disseminate new thinking and ideas about the organisation and management of such institutions."

## **University Alliance**



Extracts taken from the University Alliance website:

"The University Alliance, previously convened informally as the Alliance of Non-Aligned Universities, was formed in 2006 comprising a mixture of pre and post 1992 universities. The member institutions have a balanced portfolio of research, teaching, enterprise and innovation integral to their missions and represent a strong voice from the middle sector making a vital contribution to the prosperity of the country."

"The University Alliance is keen to be consulted on and to contribute to all areas of public debate and has responded on a range of subjects concerning Higher Education."

## **UKADIA**



The members of UKADIA are specialist creative industries, arts and design institutions from across the UK's higher and further education sectors. UKADIA's aim is to promote nationally and internationally, the distinctive character of UK specialist arts institutions providing higher education courses, and to add value to their effectiveness through recognising and advancing their links to the creative, cultural and communications industries, the community and business. The specialist colleges provide a key contribution to the UK's world-renowned reputation in the visual arts and creative industries.





There are a vast array of courses available. These include:

**Honours:** All final awards at degree level are graded – A first class honours (1<sup>st</sup>), an upper second (2.1), a lower second (2.2), and a third (3<sup>rd</sup>).

**Single Honours:** Where one subject is studied.

**Joint Honours:** Where two subjects are studied with either both subjects equally, or one as a minor and one as a major.

**Combined Honours:** Where there is even more flexibility in the chosen course (e.g. up to four courses in the first year and then two in the second ).



**Sandwich:** These are courses which have built-in placement in industry as part of the course. Often available in Business, Engineering and Computing.

**HND:** This is a full-time vocational qualification higher than A levels but lower than a degree. They usually last two or three years and combine theory and practise. Achieving good results in the first or second year would allow students to transfer to a degree level course.

**Foundation Degrees:** Introduced in 2001 in a range of work related areas, these courses are meant to meet the needs of industry and commerce, they are not studied to honours level, although good progress would enable a transfer to this level. They normally take two to three years to complete.

**Diploma in Higher Education (Dip HE):** This can be a qualification in its own right awarded for completing two years of study. Subject areas include Visual Studies, Art and Design and Popular Music. Again, access to degree level is possible.

**Year Abroad:** There are an increasing number of courses which now offer time abroad to study of work. Aside from Languages, where it may be compulsory, it may apply to American Studies, Business, Engineering, Geography and Law.

## Student Finance



Full details of the financial help available to you and how to apply can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltime-students>

Please note a paper copy of this booklet can be found in the Post 16 Office.

## Calendar of Dates



8th September 2020	First date UCAS receive applications
14 <sup>th</sup> September 2020	Oxbridge/Medicine personal statements to tutor.
Early September 2020 (yet to be confirmed by UKCAT)	UKCAT registration deadline
Early October 2020 (yet to be confirmed by UKCAT)	UKCAT last testing date
15 <sup>th</sup> October 2020	Closing date for applications to Oxford, Cambridge, medicine or veterinary science and some music courses
11 <sup>th</sup> December 2020	<b>Stanborough deadline</b> for applications
15 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Closing date for applications to UCAS

## UCAS Points System

When you apply to your universities and receive a conditional offer, you will be asked to obtain certain grades or points to be able to take up that place.

The following chart provides information about these points, but remember that every university has different requirements and you must check them. Don't make assumptions.

<b>Tariff Points</b>	<b>AS Level</b>	<b>A Level</b>	<b>BTEC</b>
56		A*	D*
48		A	D
40		B	
32		C	M
24		D	
20	A		
16	B	E	P
12	C		
10	D		
6	E		

## Useful Higher Education Websites

[www.directgov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.directgov.uk/studentfinance)

Gives guidance on student finance and how to apply

<https://www.unifrog.org/>



'The complete destinations platform'

[www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com)

Provides information about open days

[www.push.co.uk](http://www.push.co.uk)



The leading independent guide to UK universities, student life, gap years, open days, student finance and all things studentish.

[www.whatuni.com](http://www.whatuni.com)



Providing independent judgements on courses and institutions

[www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/courses](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/courses)

**MOST IMPORTANTLY-**

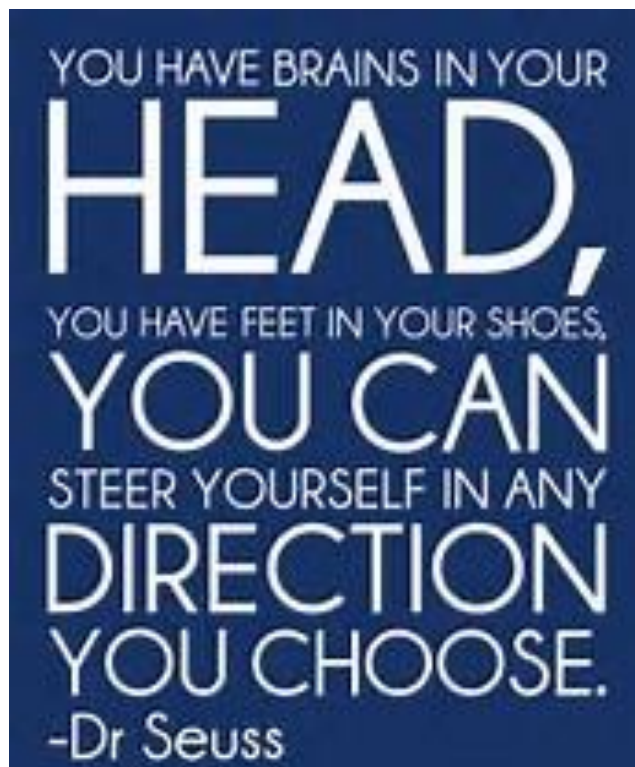
[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)



An invaluable guide to courses, tips etc.

It is essential to :

- Research the right course for you
- Produce an excellent personal statement
- Undertake relevant work experience / volunteer work
- Maximise your grades
- Make yourself stand out



# UCAS GUIDE 2020

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