



Wanstead High School

Education with Character

Options at Sixth Form Spring/Summer Term 2025



University Admissions
Information for Parents and Pupils

Applying for entry into UK higher education in 2025 (Deferred entry - 2026)

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A INTRODUCTION

This booklet is designed to make the administrative transition to university as seamless as possible.

For those pupils considering either a gap year or entering employment directly after leaving school, there are some useful starting points to stimulate further investigation.

The guidance in this booklet is largely focused on university entry but even if you are not intending to go to university, it is worth reading to ensure that you are fully informed.

Research is of critical importance. What do you really want to study? And where is the course best suited to your interests and ability?

The most successful applicants are the best informed; and if you enter the process with your eyes open, making sensible choices, then you will end up on a course that is well suited for you - and you will have a fantastic time at university.

Wanstead pupils are well supported through the application process for university. Teachers, Tutors and the Sixth Form team are all available to provide advice; the Head of Year and Assistant Headteacher (Head of Sixth Form) can provide guidance to both pupils and parents; and sixth formers who have just navigated this process, can be a source of excellent advice in the next few months.

Key points

1. **Start early and take it seriously** You are making choices that will affect the next few years of your life, at the very least, and in most cases your whole career will be influenced by the choices you make over the next few months.

Make sure your choices are your own. You know what you enjoy - and you know what you don't. You will have to study this course, and you will have to do so without the support structures that exist at school and home. Obviously, seek advice - but drive the process yourself. Do your research. The single most important factor is a passion for the subject.

Don't worry if you don't feel passionate about anything yet If you don't know yet where your interests lie, you will need to do a bit more research than some others. Don't feel constrained by your A-level subjects - there are lots of other options out there.

2. **Good Grades** Everyone will get offers, if they follow advice. You will, however, have many more options, as far as courses and universities are concerned, if your grades are as good as possible

It is important emphasising the increasingly competitive nature of entry to the best institutions of higher education in the UK. In most subjects, well over 20% of entrants earn an A*/A grade - and it is as high as 30% for some subjects. It should, therefore, be no surprise that universities that used to make offers of BBC to applicants can now routinely offer AAA or higher. Furthermore, applicants with good academic profiles may not get all the offers they expect. Many courses at leading/Russell Group universities now require A*AA and some even as high as A*A*A. Pupils whose predicted or actual grades are weaker than CCC need to consider extended degrees or foundation years. Year 12's therefore, have to work hard to ensure their predictions allow them to:

1. apply to a variety of universities
2. avoid an additional year
3. apply for competitive subjects
4. apply for competitive subjects at leading universities.

The 10 most popular university courses 2025 for 2024 entries

Source = The Complete University Guide

1. Law
2. Psychology
3. Computer Science
4. Sports Science
5. Design Studies
6. Medicine
7. Sociology
8. Economics
9. Adult Nursing
10. Business Studies

Source = The Complete University Guide

Universities Ranking (top 20) 2024

1. University of Cambridge
2. University of Oxford
3. London School of Economics
4. University of St Andrews
5. Imperial College London
6. Loughborough University
7. Durham University
8. University of Bath
9. UCL (University College London)
10. Lancaster University/University of Warwick
11. University of Surrey
12. University of Birmingham
13. University of Exeter
14. The University of Edinburgh
15. University of Bristol
16. University of York
17. University of Sheffield
18. University of Liverpool
19. University of Southampton

The ranking is based on a number of factors including student satisfaction. Russell Group Universities not in the above list include Queen Mary University of London, Nottingham, Liverpool, Cardiff, Southampton, Queens Belfast, Newcastle.

The rankings vary for each course however so please check the subject league tables using The Complete University Guide website (see section M).

The key to success is making your application as compelling as possible. Work experience in-person/online with Spring Pod; academic credentials, engaging with HE in Year 12, super curricular participation, courses with MOOCs, clear evidence of wider reading; a healthy extra-curricular interest - it all adds up. Whilst grades are clearly important, universities are increasingly looking for individuals who stands out from the crowd and has a deep interest in their subject that goes beyond the classroom.

The process of applying to university is an exciting one. The next twelve months are about making that happen.

B TIMELINE FOR THE UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS PROCESS.

29th April 2025	- UCAS' search tool for entry 2026 courses goes live
13th May 2025	- Undergraduate applications open for 2026 entry
10th July 2025	- Conservatoire applications open for 2026 entry
2nd September 2025	- Completed undergraduate applications can be submitted to UCAS
26th September 2025	- Wanstead's Internal deadline for Oxbridge/Early Applications
2nd October 2025	- Application deadline for conservatoire music applications
15th October 2025	
Mid October/early November	- Additional tests for Oxbridge, Medicine and competitive courses e.g., BMAT and TMUA are sat at an external test centre
3rd November 2025	
First/Second week of December	- Oxbridge and Medical interviews
14th January 2026	- (18:00 UK time) Deadline for Equal consideration for applications for most undergraduate courses
26th February 2026	- UCAS Extra opens. Applicants who have used all five choices and are not holding any offers may be able to add another choice in their application.
May 2026	- Student Finance Application deadline to make sure funding is available for the start of your course
5th July 2026	- Student Finance Application deadline to make sure funding is available for the start of your course
August 2026	- A Level Results Day

If you are an early applicant and are applying to Oxbridge or for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinarian courses, please let us know as soon as possible and no later than the beginning of September so that we can support you.

C THE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES ADMISSIONS SERVICE (UCAS)

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service - universally known as UCAS - manages the application process for virtually all full-time undergraduate courses in the UK. It acts to bring applicants and universities together. Applicants for some music courses, foundation art courses or dance School, as well as those applying to overseas universities, will not need to use UCAS, however, most of these applicants are likely to submit a UCAS application as well.

The UCAS website - www.ucas.com - is an invaluable source of information. From its homepage, applicants can clearly navigate their way through the process.

Course Search - This enables you to access information on all the courses that are available in UK universities, and provides information on entry requirements and course structure. Pupils should be using this on a regular basis. This is live from 29th April 2025.

Apply - This is the process through which pupils will apply to universities. It is an entirely web-based system, which means that forms can be produced virtually error free, and processed by UCAS much more quickly than the previous paper-based methods of application. To use Apply, pupils must register with UCAS, and this can be done through the UCAS website. (Pupils will be logging onto their application regularly between May and November.)

Track - Pupils can track the progress of their UCAS application through 'Track'. Pupils will be logging onto this section of the website regularly between October 2025 and May 2026.

1. **Registration** We will support students to register in the summer term.
2. **The Application** There are several sections to complete - Personal Information, Education and Qualifications, Employment, Course Choices, Personal Statement and Reference. Applicants can apply for a maximum of five courses. You cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge, and healthcare applicants (i.e., for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science) can only apply for four such courses but can also apply for one course in another subject (e.g., Biological Sciences, Pharmacy, Optometry or Radiography). It is advisable to select the same course at five different universities thereby ensuring the personal statement makes sense to all five.
3. **Deadlines** The official deadline for applications to reach UCAS is 31st January 2026. Whilst UCAS will continue to accept applications after that date, they will not be treated on an equal footing to applications received in advance of that date. Many popular courses will be filled with pupils who applied in advance of the January deadline, and course availability will therefore decline rapidly from mid-January onwards. Please note that the school's internal deadline is November 3rd 2025 and priority will be given to pupils submitting their application by our internal deadline date when arranging 1:1 meeting with pupils to discuss their applications, give further advice and support, in addition to being able to quality check their applications. The internal deadline date is to also ensure that we can process all applications by the official deadline date.

Whilst universities should treat all applications received in advance of the 14th January 2026 deadline equally, it is our experience that offers do start to appear from early November and some pupils every year secure all five offers or hear back from all their institutions before the Christmas Holidays, where pupils have applied early. Consequently, we do encourage pupils to submit their UCAS form as early as possible.

Applications to Oxford and Cambridge - as well as all applications for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science - have an earlier UCAS deadline of **15th October 2025**. We will therefore require all Oxbridge and healthcare applicants to have their UCAS form completed by **Friday 26th September 2025**. Please can you make sure that this deadline is adhered to, so as to enable us to have ample time to check it, refine it (if necessary) and add the school reference.

4. **Invisibility of Choice** No institution can see where else an applicant has applied; meaning applicants can apply for different courses at different universities. However, if you are applying for widely different courses, it is almost impossible to write an effective Personal Statement, to say nothing of what it suggests about your own knowledge of what you want to study! So, whilst it is reasonable to apply for Economics at Cambridge and Economics and Statistics at York, it is not advisable to apply for English at Warwick and Mechanical Engineering at Exeter.

NB: For those who are applying for medical courses, pupils can write a second personal statement for their 5th choice, for example a medical applicant wanting to study genetics as their 5th choice would need to contact the university and ask if they could send their personal statement to them directly for consideration.

No element of the UCAS form can be changed after it has been submitted: the personal statement and the reference, for example, are fixed - NB There is a 14-day window to change course choices on 'track' from when pupils receive their welcome e-mail. However, if an applicant has not applied for five courses - the maximum number - then they can add courses (up to that maximum) after their form has been submitted.

5. **Fees** The UCAS fee will be £28.50 in 2025 and is payable directly to UCAS once application has been completed by pupils. Changes can still be made after this following advice from school (see below).
6. **Following Submission** The UCAS form is submitted to UCAS by the school, after pupils have had their 1:1 meetings and it has been checked for quality control. Errors can be fixed at this stage so there is no risk in 'pay-sending'. This includes adding predicted grades and a reference. No application is sent to UCAS without the pupil's permission.

On receipt of an application, UCAS will send the applicant a welcome e-mail acknowledging the application and the applicant will be given a UCAS tracking number.

This number is of critical importance. First, it will be needed to track an application on the UCAS website. Secondly, universities will only discuss applications over the phone with an applicant who has this number. UCAS will send reduced-size hard copies of a pupil's application form to each of the institutions to which the pupil has applied. The institutions will make their decision independently of each other, and relay them to the applicant via UCAS Track (though some universities - most notably Oxford and Cambridge - still get in touch directly). Some Admissions Tutors at some universities will not make any decisions in advance of 14th January; others make offers once they start receiving application. In some cases, applicants may be invited for interview before a decision is made.

7. **Rejections, Offers and the UCAS Tariff** If pupils have followed our advice - namely, they have only applied for courses where required grades are in-line with pupil's predicted grades, and they have applied for a good spread of universities, rejections are rare. NB it is noticeably more difficult for pupils to secure offers for Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science, Nursing, Midwifery, Social Work and Physiotherapy.

Offers are likely to be conditional on a certain level of performance at A-level. Conditional offers may be expressed in a variety of forms, and it is very important that pupils read these offers very carefully, so they know exactly what they need to achieve.

- The offer may be based on A-level grades, with no subject-based restrictions: e.g. A*AA or ABB.
- The offer may be based on A-level grades, with a subject-based restriction: e.g., AAA, with an A in English (possible if the applicant is doing four subjects to A-level); or ABB, with an A in Physics.
- The offer may be based on the number of UCAS tariff points to be achieved. Information on UCAS tariff points is given in the table below.
- Any combination of the above: e.g., 112 UCAS points, with a B in Maths.

UCAS have implemented a new tariff system; the details of this and the many permutations that are used to calculate the tariff score can be found here;

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/ucas-tariff-points>

	EPQ = UCAS points
A* at A-Level = 56 UCAS points	A* 28
A = 48 UCAS points	A 24
B = 40 UCAS points	B 20
C = 32 UCAS points	C 16
D = 24 UCAS points	D 12
E = 16 UCAS points	E 8

It is very important for pupils to realise that they are likely to be rejected unless all the conditions of their offer are met. However, increasingly universities are making unconditional offers to outstanding candidates. It really is in the pupils' interest therefore to prepare thoroughly and gather impressive experiences for their personal statement. In many cases last year universities accepted pupils that missed the terms of their offer narrowly but this is unpredictable and based on supply and demand.

Accepting Offers You do not have to reply to any offers until you have received your last decision (i.e., heard from all five of your institutions). If you know before then that you definitely want to accept firmly one of the offers, you can do so. However, it is not advisable to do this unless you are absolutely sure that this is the course/university/college you want to commit yourself to attending.

You may also decline any offer you receive before you have received all your decisions from UCAS. However, you cannot change your mind later and accept that offer.

When you have received replies from all your chosen universities, you will be given a 'reply to offers' date in Track. You can only accept one **firm choice** and one **insurance choice** you must decline the remainder. You will be asked to reply to your offers within 14, days of receiving the statement of decision. You will not lose the offers made to you, provided that you reply to UCAS by a date in early May. However, failure to reply to UCAS by their deadline will result in them declining all offers on your behalf.

As stated above, you can hold a maximum of two offers. You must accept one conditional offer firmly (CF). You can hold one additional offer as insurance (Ci). If you accept an unconditional offer firmly, there is obviously no need for insurance. The insurance offer should have a lower requirement than the firm offer: it rather defeats the purpose of insurance if it doesn't.

Once you have replied to your offers, UCAS will send you a final statement of your replies and all the decisions made. Your universities will then contact you about accommodation.

It is important to choose your offers wisely. If you meet the terms of your firm offer, then you are committed to that course institution - even if, bizarrely, your insurance offer is higher than your firm offer, and you have met this higher offer. (The only exception to this is if you enter Adjustment - see below.) If your results do not meet the terms of your firm offer, but do fulfil the conditions of your insurance offer, then you are committed to that course and institution. The only alternative to these options is to withdraw from UCAS fully and have a GAP year. If you have changed your mind by this stage, then we would encourage you to do this.

Therefore, the standard procedure is to accept a first choice offer that you are determined to achieve (and capable of doing so). Then, select an insurance offer of lower demand from an institution you would still be happy to attend if Results Day goes worse than expected.

8. **Five Rejections: UCAS Extra** If you are unlucky enough to receive five rejections which is extremely rare you can enter a process known as UCAS Extra. Extra is another chance for you to get a university place between 28th February and 4th July. If you have used all 5 choices and are not holding offers, you'll be able to add another choice using extra. This allows you to apply to institutions where vacancies still exist. You can only apply to one course at a time, and you must have applied to the full 5 range of courses on your original form. This is another reason to choose 5 courses.
9. **Clearing and UCAS Extra** Clearing opens July 5th for pupils that have applied after 30th June or anyone not holding any offers. Otherwise clearing operates from Results Day in August, through into September, and is used to match unplaced applicants with vacancies on courses. It goes without saying that popular courses tend not to accept pupils through Clearing, but more information is provided on the process in Section I below.

Extra is another chance for you to get a university place between 26th February and 4th July. If you have used all 5 choices and are not holding offers, you'll be able to add another choice using extra.

D DEFERRED ENTRY (GAP YEAR) AND POST A-LEVEL APPLICATIONS

There are a range of excellent reasons for taking a Gap Year. Any one of these may be a determining factor for one individual.

- a. It provides a refreshing break from academic study enabling pupils to get off the conveyor belt of the education system for a while, and learn to look after themselves. In this way it helps to develop independence, adaptability and maturity.
- b. It provides practical advantages in that it can be used to earn some money for university or it can provide an excellent opportunity to get some work experience in a likely career field - this is particularly relevant if you are applying for a vocational course such as Engineering or Medicine.
- c. It can enable pupils to experience a totally different culture taking them outside their comfort zone. This can be done through independent travel; however, there are lots of excellent companies that provide more structured (and socially worthwhile) experiences.
- d. It can allow pupils to appreciate how difficult it is to earn a living wage as an unskilled worker-thereby reinforcing their desire to achieve further qualifications!
- e. If used wisely it can provide a valuable addition to a CV. Some employers like GAP years, and pupils are likely to find the range of application forms they face in their second and third years at university more straightforward if they can draw on their GAP year experience to answer some of the questions.

Generally speaking, most universities are quite happy for applicants to be applying for deferred entry (a simple process, which just involves ticking a box on the application form). Courses such as Geography, Anthropology, PPE, International Relations etc. can be well suited to gap years whilst others such as maths are much less well suited. You will have to explain how you have used your gap year productively at interview or through your personal statement.

E CHOICE OF COURSE AND INSTITUTION

As outlined in the Introduction, the choice of university course must be yours and yours alone. This is a course that you are going to have to pursue for three years and, if you want a good degree, it will require some hard work. The support structures that exist at Wanstead will not exist at university - independent learning is of key importance, and this is hard if you don't enjoy the subject.

You should focus on your course choice before you start worrying about where you want to study. There are a few principles that I would encourage you to bear in mind.

Don't be constrained by your A-level subject selection. Obviously, you need to have the academic background that is required for entry onto your chosen course - you can't apply for a Maths degree without A-level Maths, but there are thousands of courses out there. You can combine subjects; you can study new ones. Enter this process with an open mind. There are about 120 universities that recruit through the UCAS process, offering, between them, about 55,000 courses. If you are going to set off in an entirely new academic direction, then you need to be certain that it is the direction for you: so, research is all the more important.

Remember that you should not view a degree course as a simple continuation of A-level study. Straight Economics at university, for example, is more mathematical than it is at A-level. On top of that, courses will vary at different institutions - make sure you know what the nature of a history course is, for example, before applying: the History course at Sheffield may be entirely different to the one at Leeds.

Be realistic and pitch it right. Apply to places that will give you offers - if you apply to a course that will require three As, yet you are heading towards (and are predicted) three B's, then you may get an offer but you are unlikely to meet the terms of that offer. If you think you are capable of three A's, then you need to allow us to make that prediction by demonstrating that potential in class and in your mock exams. Predicted grades should be aspirational yet realistic.

1. What do I want to study? This is an easy question if you are fascinated by one particular subject area, and have an academic desire to delve more deeply. It is slightly harder if, as yet, you have not found anything about which you are passionate. If that, is you, consider the following questions:

- a. Where do your academic skills lie? What are you good at? What do you find difficult?
 - b. Who do you trust to give you honest advice? Seek that advice, be it from parents, friends, the Sixth Form team, tutors and teachers.
 - c. What job do you see yourself doing in five years' time? Is there a possibility that this might be a job that requires a vocational degree course, such as Medicine, Dentistry or Social Work?
 - d. What topics do you find yourself 'tuning into' when you stumble across them on the TV, or in the paper?
 - e. Might I go on a Taster Course.? University Taster Courses are a good way of getting a sense of whether a course is right for you. Many universities offer these, but there are several based in London, held between now and July. You can find out more at www.london.ac.uk/tasters
 - f. Am I studying the correct combination of A-levels for the course I am vaguely interested in?
- 2. Where do I want to study?** Once you have some sense of what you want to study, you need to find the course that is right for you. This requires a bit of research, most of which will take place on the internet. The UCAS website provides a good first stop for research on courses - it provides an easy route to identifying all the courses in the UK that revolve around specified subject interests, and provides quick information on the entry requirements. You can immediately identify whether a course is pitched right for you, and therefore whether further research is appropriate. The website address is wwwucas.com

You should then proceed to the website of the university department in which you are interested. This will give you more thorough information on the exact format of the course, and what you would be expected to do.

You might want to bear in mind some of the following points as a way of narrowing down your choice of institution.

- a. Read course descriptions carefully. Different courses in the same subject often vary considerably in detail.
- b. Taught by experts. Some institutions have particularly good reputations in specific areas. They will be harder to get into, but you will be taught by world experts. Also, Russell Group universities receive much more money for research so have many more globally recognised academics and this is why most pupils should at least consider applying to The Russell Group.
- c. Systems of exams differ considerably: are they terminal or modular; how much continuous assessment is there?
- d. In science subjects the emphasis on practical work will vary between institutions.
- e. The size of the institution (and the city/town it is in) can have a significant impact on the style of student experience. Where do you want to live for three years? Do you want a campus university where everything is on one site or a city centre university spread across several sites?
- f. The location type and cost of accommodation could be a factor.

1. **'Top Universities'** You may see reference to various 'premier leagues' of universities. There is the Russell Group. This group of 24 universities includes Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Imperial, Kings College London, Leeds, Liverpool, London School of Economics, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Queen Mary University of London, Queen's Belfast, Sheffield, Southampton, University College London and Warwick. This list is often used to define the "best universities". This isn't entirely correct; The Russell Group do receive more research funding but aren't necessarily at the top of university league tables. They tend to be towards the top but there are other excellent universities beyond The Russell Group. It is important to be open-minded.

Therefore, to maximise your chances of a good range of offers, we strongly urge candidates not to choose more than three of the very top universities, particularly if you are applying for a 'hot', competitive course.

With only five applications allowed, you must make your choices count. No candidate can include more than four choices for Medicine on the UCAS form.

4. **'League Tables'** You might want to take a look at the university 'league tables' for your subject, though I would emphasise the normal health warning: league tables are compiled in different ways, using different criteria and for different purposes-they should not be taken as the be all and end all.

The Times: <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/>

The Guardian: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide>

The Good University Guide: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/public/gug/>

Try also:

www.ukcoursefinder.com www.unistats.com

<http://www.studentbook.org/> www.whatuni.com

The UniStats website (www.unistats.com) This website includes information from the National Students' Survey for every course at every university. This 'voice' from current students will give you some critical

information that you will never find on websites or on Open Days - in particular, regarding the amount of academic support that you are likely to receive, the quality of marking, the quality of teaching etc. If you have identified a course that you are enthusiastic about at a university you are interested in and then we encourage you to attend on an Open Day.

F APPLYING TO OXFORD OR CAMBRIDGE AND ADMISSIONS TESTS

It goes without saying that Oxford and Cambridge demand exceptional academic profiles; certainly, applicants to these universities will have many GCSE's 7 or higher. Applicants without this sort of profile are likely to be de-summoned - i.e., their application will be rejected without interview.

The application process at Oxford and Cambridge includes formal, academic interviews and, in the majority of cases, written aptitude tests. Both Oxford and Cambridge applicants will be required to sit aptitude tests for many degree courses. These are generally completed in advance of interview in early October/November and, again, these tests are used to deselect candidates in advance of interview so are important. Many courses also require applicants to submit examples of school work.

Applicants should check the university websites/ individual colleges to see if admissions tests are required. Examples of these are:

- **ELAT:** a 1.5 hour test for Oxford English candidates.
- **UCAT:** for all the other medical and dental schools except Bristol, Birmingham and Liverpool. A 2 hour test sat at Pearson Professional (Driving) Centres by mid-October. The University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT) is used by most universities to select applicants to their medical and dental degree programmes. Please note, booking deadline is 19th September 2025 and testing closes 26th September 2025.
- **LNAT:** 2 hour test for Law applicants to Oxbridge and eleven other universities, sat in designated centres by early November.
- **HAT:** History test for Oxford, sat in school in November.
- **TSA (Cambridge):** Thinking skills for various Cambridge courses, including Computer Science, Economics, Engineering and Natural Sciences at some colleges, sat in Cambridge during interview period.
- **TSA (Oxford):** 2 hour test for various Oxford courses - PPE, Economics & Management, Experimental Psychology and Psychology & Philosophy sat in School in November.
- There are also Oxford aptitude tests in Classics, Physics, Languages, Maths and Computer Science.

G SUMMER TERM YEAR 12 AND THE SUMMER HOLIDAY

The summer holidays are certainly a time for rest and recuperation. It is also a good opportunity to get those lingering questions regarding university applications answered, and to tie up loose ends.

Open Days There are 'Open Days' happening at university throughout the year but the bulk of these occur between April and October. You can plan your visits by checking the calendar at www.opendays.com it is worth noting that many open days are now on Saturday and so pupils need not take time off school to attend. Open Days are an opportunity to go and have a hard look at the institutions in which you have developed a definite interest.

It is, however, not time efficient to be travelling round the country visiting all the university towns and cities without a particular purpose in mind. We recommend proper research beforehand. Where possible, make visits at weekends and during the holidays. There are some simple school rules:

- a. Pupils can only attend a maximum of three Open Days during term time (i.e., no more than three school days missed).
- b. Attendance at Open Days requires at least two days' notice and for pupils to complete a purple educational visit form.
- c. Pupils must liaise in advance with their subject teachers regarding work or commitments.
- b. Many universities have already published their Open Day dates. Two useful websites to visit are;

www.opendays.com/calendar

www.ucas.com/events

You are advised to check university websites for further information.

NB. Many Oxford and Cambridge colleges and departments have their own Open Days. Pupils considering a particular college should register for the appropriate Open Day (information is available on the internet.)

Oxford and Cambridge run specific Open Days for Law applicants, though the dates are yet to be confirmed. The Cambridge Law Course is an excellent experience for any likely applicant for Law to a competitive university.

Don't forget that it is often worthwhile to visit universities and cities informally during the holidays you may get a better sense of the true atmosphere of an institution.

As well as attending Open Days, pupils will be provided with the information they need to go through the practicalities of submitting the UCAS form during the summer term. The importance of using this period to good effect cannot be over-stated: the Autumn Term of Year 13 will be much, much easier, and the university application process more successful, if you have made good use of the Summer Term to draft your personal statement and confirm your five-course choice

H ENRICHMENT

As university places become ever more competitive, academic qualifications are now not necessarily enough to secure a place at a top university. Universities increasingly place greater emphasis on academic enrichment and independence; the ability of pupils to investigate something that intellectually challenges them all of their own volition (i.e., with no assistance or input from parents and teachers alike).

A massive open online course (MOOC) is an online course aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web. In addition to traditional course materials such as filmed lectures, readings, and problem sets, many MOOCs provide interactive support between pupils, professors, and teaching assistants. The number of MOOC courses available online is endless and they cover an enormous range of quite diverse topics. They are free and easy to enrol on, provide a means of focused, independent research, particularly over the summer break, and are hugely interesting and rewarding. A good starting point would be;

<https://www.mooc-list.com/>

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

Courses such as these are highly regarded by universities and make a useful and valuable addition to a UCAS application.

I INTERVIEWS

The large majority of UCAS applicants are not interviewed. However, all Oxbridge applicants will be interviewed in a rigorous, academic manner - as will all applicants for medicine. The interview will be an important part of the selection process and it should be prepared for carefully. Interviews may involve a practical element, particularly likely for Music, Drama or Dance, and applicants may have to take samples of their work (e.g., for Art or Architecture).

The following points should be considered regarding academic interviews.

1. Make sure you know about the details of the course, as outlined in the Prospectus. It will look very poor if you are unable to comment sensibly on the course for which you have applied.
2. It is quite likely that some part of the interview will revolve around the personal statement. Make sure that you can remember what you wrote - and if you said you had read (and enjoyed) a particular book, make sure that you have re-read it (or read it) before the interview.
3. Don't try to be something you aren't in the interview room. It is only by relaxing and being yourself that you will be able to think on your feet and come across as the sort of person that the Admissions Team would want to teach.

J RESULTS DAY

Your results day falls in August 2026 - it is best to plan to be around: try not to be away from home. In essence, you will find yourself in one of seven scenarios.

1. You have fulfilled the conditions of your firm offer. Your first-choice place is confirmed.
If you have just missed the terms of your firm conditional offer, you may contact the institution to see if they will take you nonetheless; if they will not, and if you have met the terms of your insurance offer, your place at that institution is confirmed. Note: there are no circumstances under which you will attend your 'insurance' institution, if the terms of its conditions are higher than the terms of your firm offer.
2. You have missed the terms of your insurance offer. You may contact the institution to see if they will take you nonetheless; if they will not, then your application will enter CLEARING (UCAS does this automatically). You will now need to call around at a few universities to see if you can find a place on a course that interests you in a town you are happy to live in. If they agree to give you a course offer verbally on the phone, you will then need to log on to UCAS and choose the course as a firm choice. This can be stressful system, and you must make these decisions carefully and in a measured way. Do not make decisions with which you are not happy – you can also withdraw from UCAS and reapply in the next application cycle if you need more time.
3. You have significantly beaten the terms of your firm offer, and now think that you would like to go somewhere 'better'. You could try and secure such a place through UCAS - CLEARING- of which there are more details in Section C. You could always re-apply the following year.
4. You have been rejected by all the institutions you applied to, and you have failed to find an offer through UCAS EXTRA- of which there are more details in Section C. If your grades are higher than you expected, you might get in touch with the institutions that rejected you to see if they will reconsider their decision in light of this new information.
5. If your grades are lower than you hoped for and you have been rejected by your CF and Ci, you will enter CLEARING to see if you can find a place on a course that interests you in a town you are happy to live in.
6. You will have your A-level grades, but no offers since you decided to apply post- qualification. You will now embark on the process of submitting your UCAS application in 2026, seeking to receive unconditional offers for entry in September 2027.

If you find yourself in situations 2, 3, 4 or 5, you are likely to have to make several telephone calls - and this is likely to be a frustrating experience, since many hundreds of other students across the country are doing the same thing and university admissions offices are busy. Keep calm and be patient. School staff will be around to help and provide advice in sixth form private study. You can only benefit from this if you are in school yourself. In addition to your UCAS ID number, we recommend that you have a copy of your personal statement to hand as you may be asked some questions over the phone and it would be helpful if you had this to refer to.

K STUDENT FINANCE

Information regarding student finance will be given as part of our Preparing for HE day in the summer term. There is also plenty of information available at www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance. You can also look at the UCAS website www.ucas.com/students/studentfinance.

A useful source of information is Martin Lewis of Money Saving Expert. A helpful guide to fees entitled, "You Can Afford To Go To Uni" can be found here.

www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-guide

The strands of university finance for last year were as follows.

- 1. Tuition Fees** Most universities are charging £9,535 per year for tuition. You will be able to get a loan to cover the full cost of tuition, which will be repayable once your gross income (after graduation) goes above £25,000 per year. The earliest you can start repaying your student loan is 6th April, the year after you leave college or university.
- 2. Maintenance Loan** You can also borrow money to fund your living costs - this is repayable once your gross income (after graduation) goes above £25,000 per year. The arrangements for this loan are likely to be unchanged on the current system, though the figures available are likely to be changed in line with the cost of living. For 2024 entry, the maximum loans were as follows: £8,610 if you live in your parents' home; £13,348 if you are living away from your parents' home and studying in London; £10,277 if you are living away from your parents' home and studying outside London. The minimum maintenance loan is £3,698 (paid to students with a household income of £58,291) and the maximum maintenance loan is £13,348 (paid to students living away from home whose annual household income is £25,000).
- 3. Debt** For graduates earning £27,295 or less the debt will be charged an interest rate of RPI inflation. There will be a sliding scale, with the interest rate increasing with income. All debts will be cancelled if not fully repaid within 40 years of graduation. Obviously, if repaid in advance of this time, payments on the loans will cease. Some universities offer bursaries to students who would otherwise be unable to remain in full-time education. Information on these bursaries is available from the universities themselves. Nonetheless, these changes will make higher education significantly more expensive for the average student; this is likely to have several effects on the sector.
- 4. Importance of research** Students are likely to become more demanding in terms of the quality of education they receive. In light of the financial investment involved, it is worth considering the quality of education that a university provides in advance of application. This is why websites such as www.unistats.com can be so helpful-see Section E.
- 5.** Students may well be conscious of the financial costs they are incurring as result of attendance at university, and this may make them more focused, particularly when it comes to pursuing well-rewarded avenues of graduate employment.

L ALTERNATIVES TO UCAS

Art School If you wish to study Art and Design to degree level, you will first have to complete a foundation year at Art School. The application process for this course is done directly with the university or school - i.e. not through UCAS. Pupils will have to write a personal statement to submit alongside the school reference and application form. At a later date, they will be asked to present a portfolio. The institution at which the pupil completes their foundation year will assist with application onto the Art or Design degree course. Further guidance regarding Art and Design courses should be sought from the Art Department.

Conservatoires

Courses are based around individual tuition, practical training, and frequent opportunities to perform. UCAS Conservatoires is the application service for performance-based courses in the UK. Each conservatoire has its own strengths and specialisms, so it's important to research all of them to find the right fit for you. For example, although all conservatoires offer music courses, only two offer drama courses, and some offer subjects like film and production. To help decide, research what graduates from each conservatoire have gone on to do, to see if this fits with your aspirations.

The Forces All branches of the armed forces will accept people to train for a Commission after A level. The requirements are five pass grades at GCSE (including English Language, Mathematics, and either a Science or a Modern Language), and two A level passes. However, for Officer Entry the standard entry point is as a graduate; in fact, generous bursaries are available for people wishing to follow this route.

Wider Employment There are an increasing number of businesses that offer apprenticeships, bursaries through university, a combination of employment and study that may lead to a degree, and others besides. A useful starting point for further research is <http://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/>, a user friendly and informative website.

Scholarships/school leavers Degree Programmes/Higher Apprenticeships

As competition for university places increases every year, the number of qualified graduates hitting the job market is also on the rise. As a result, many companies and corporations are offering employment opportunities straight from school, some with the opportunity of completing a degree at a later stage, after initial training.

More information can be found at;

www.ukcareerguide.ey.com/schools

www.KPMGcareers.co.uk/schoolleavers

www.pwc.com/uk/schools

Generally, the prospect of employment seems attractive to pupils who are, as yet, uncertain as to the degree course they wish to pursue. The process of research - encouraged throughout this booklet - is therefore to be encouraged all the more forcefully, and pupils are very welcome to come and discuss their future opportunities with the Head of Sixth Form or their HOY. The very act of making a UCAS application can provide focus and goals, as well as helping pupils to assess their own talents and skills.

M KEY WEBSITES AND LINKS

Here are a list of websites and links that you may find useful when planning and preparing for your next steps.

UCAS website: www.ucas.com

Open days calendar: www.opendays.com/calendar

Taster days: www.london.ac.uk/tasters

Work experience: www.springpod.com

UniFrog (pupils have logins): www.unifrog.com

Guide: www.ukcareerguide.ey.com/schools

Guide: www.KPMGcareers.co.uk/schoolleavers

Opportunities: www.pwc.com/uk/schools

Apprenticeships: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

Alternative pathway information: <http://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/>

MOOC courses: <https://www.mooc-list.com/>

Courses: <https://www.coursera.org/>

Student finance: www.gov.uk/student-finance

Money Saving Expert: www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-guide