



JFS Sixth Form

A Student Handbook

Progression after Sixth Form

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JFS FUTURES PROGRAMME



fUTURES

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Introduction

The majority of Advanced Level (A Level, CACHE Diploma and Hospitality Diploma) students at JFS make successful applications to higher education each year. **HOWEVER**, while the majority of our students have progressed onto higher education in the past, sixth form students have an increasing range of options open to them, including apprenticeships, school leaver programmes and higher education abroad and this booklet reflects this trend.

Here are the main points you will need to think about:

- Initially, you should concentrate your efforts on choosing what subject, apprenticeship or programme you want to do, and understanding why you want to do it. Everything else should follow on from this.
- Due to funding changes for universities, there is currently more of a free market developing in university entrance. Some universities will make unconditional offers based on AS levels results and increasingly you cannot always trust the entry requirements a university says it requires.
- You will also need to weigh up the hugely increasing costs of a university education against the benefits you might gain from it. The minimum a university will charge per year is £6000 and the maximum will be £9000. While higher education will still be free at the point of access, we will all need to become independent financial advisers to understand the repayment terms.
- JFS will keep you informed of opportunities such as apprenticeships and training through Fronter, presentations and notice boards.

The best way to use this handbook is to dip into it at the appropriate times, using the contents page. Don't lose it! We wish you the best of luck with your applications.

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All your options at 18+

A good starting place is to consider the whole range options open to you such as:

1. Full time UK university degree in a fully vocational subject, e.g. Pharmacy.
2. Full time UK university degree in a semi-vocational / professional accreditation subject, e.g. Law.
3. Full time UK university degree in an 'academic' subject, e.g. Philosophy.
4. Full time UK university degree in a joint/combined/multidisciplinary subject, e.g. History and Spanish.
5. Two-year degree, foundation degree or HND, e.g. LLB Degree at *BPP* or *University of Law*.
6. Private sector degree, e.g. *New College of the Humanities*.
7. Private sector diploma course, e.g. *Oxford Aviation Academy* (N.B £80,000).
8. Degree at a European university in English, e.g. European Studies at *Maastricht University*.
9. Degree at a university in US - 4,000 universities to consider,
10. Degree at university elsewhere, e.g. *McGill University*, Canada.
11. UK university with a year abroad, e.g. *Aston University* can offer work / study / teaching placements worldwide.
12. UK university with an overseas campus, e.g. *University of Nottingham* has campuses in China and Malaysia.
13. UK degree with sponsorship, e.g. *Institution of Civil Engineers Quest Scholarship*.
14. UK university with a year in industry. Some specialise in offering sandwich or a professional year across wide range of courses (like *Aston*, *Bath*, *Brunel*, *Hertfordshire*, *Loughborough*, *Surrey* (and hidden gems, e.g. Politics & Parliamentary Studies at *Leeds*).
15. University / employer partnership degree, e.g. Business (in Company) at *Nottingham Trent University*; some fees paid, work experience and get paid.
16. Degree apprenticeship, e.g. *Cap Gemini*: job with p/t university degree, get paid and course fees covered.
17. Salaried school leaver programmes, e.g. train in audit / tax / advisory at *BDO*.
18. Higher Apprenticeships for A Level/BTEC Level 3 students, such as *CILEX* and *Investment 2020*.
19. Advanced Apprenticeships for students with GCSE passes, but popular ones such as *Network Rail* and *Creative Pioneers* get A Level students applying.
20. Specialised Apprenticeships, e.g. *Savile Row Bespoke Tailoring Apprenticeship* or *Royal Academy of Culinary Arts Chef / Restaurant Management Apprenticeship*.
21. The hidden job market. Company websites, speculative applications, word of mouth, employment agencies, networking through family, friends or contacts or with firms with whom you've already gained experience.
22. Armed and emergency services e.g. UK Armed Forces/*IDF*.
23. Self-employment, portfolio, temping or seasonal work.
 - a. Self-employment: 18 year-olds DO sometimes set up their own businesses and / or operate in a freelance capacity.
 - b. Portfolio careers: doing more than one job at the same time, or mixing part-time work with other activities (very common for Creatives).
 - c. Temping or seasonal work: get their foot in the door, often using private employment agencies.
24. Paid gap year schemes, e.g. *Step Forward*, *Deloitte* and *Year in Industry Programme*.
25. Gap years abroad / UK, e.g. Year out in Israel.
26. Full-time Further Education courses, e.g. Art Foundation.

Higher Education and Apprenticeships: The Careers Adviser's View

Every young person is a unique individual and Careers Advisers are concerned with helping them to make unique and individual decisions about their future, based on their abilities, interests, values and attitudes. Therefore the information below is trying, impartially, to unpick and deconstruct many of the issues young people will have to consider when choosing Higher Education and Apprenticeships.

Who, What, Where, How, When and Why?!

Who is this information for?

The information below is written for school / college students at the sixth form / FE college stage who are undertaking Level 3 courses (A Level or equivalent).

What are some of the differences between higher education and apprenticeships that we need to know now?

Higher Education

An undergraduate degree is normally a full-time course undertaken at a university or college, which you fund by taking out a loan to pay for your tuition fees and your maintenance. Most undergraduate degree courses lead to honours degrees in three years. Some have a work placement year or a year abroad and are four years long. In subjects such as medicine and architecture, courses may take even longer. Undergraduate degrees are available in a huge range of subjects. Some vocational subjects will virtually guarantee entry to that field, e.g. dentistry, while some vocational subjects will give you exemptions from your professional qualifications, e.g. law, while all other undergraduate degrees will be considered by many employers and professional conversion courses.

Apprenticeship

An Apprenticeship is a job with training which allows you to earn while you learn, whilst gaining a nationally recognised qualification. Apprenticeships take between one and five years to complete and cover 1500 job roles in a wide range of industries, from engineering to accountancy, public relations to veterinary nursing. Apprenticeships are now available up to degree level and beyond.

- An Advanced Apprenticeship normally requires GCSE passes at C or equivalent (though people with A levels or equivalent will often do an Advanced Apprenticeship, if it's a hard to get into career field).
- A Higher Apprenticeship normally requires A Levels or equivalent such as BTEC or CACHE.

What could you do?

Before we start thinking about the issue of university and apprenticeships, we have to take a step back and consider what was said earlier, "What are my abilities, interests, values and attitudes?"

If you are a sixth form student with some sort of career idea?

Let's look at three different sixth form students who we asked about their abilities, interests, values and attitudes:

- Student 1
Is doing AS Level business, feels they are capable of doing well, really likes the marketing element of the course but also can be a bit techy, they see themselves in a business / sales environment and is unsure about whether to go to university or do an apprenticeship.

- **Student 2**

Is doing biology, chemistry, maths and psychology AS Levels, is one of the best science and maths students in the school, is obsessed with becoming a doctor and knows that they have to go to medical school at university, and is really excited by this.

- **Student 3**

Is doing English, French, sociology and politics AS Levels, knows that they can do well if they put some effort in, will watch anything on telly / Youtube about houses, design of buildings and even though they didn't do maths AS level they are comfortable with numbers. Is very interested in either university or apprenticeships!

Now we have some idea of where these students are, we can start moving forward:

Student 1 has decided to explore marketing, therefore they would need to consider the following:

- Advanced Apprenticeship in Tech and Social Media e.g. *Just IT*
- Higher Apprenticeship in marketing and public relations e.g. *PRCA*
- Degree in marketing e.g. *Aston University* (with placement year)
- Degree in business / management with a marketing specialism e.g. *Westminster*
- Degree in something else, e.g. fashion at *Nottingham Trent* then marketing internship with *L'Oreal*
- Degree in any discipline, then postgraduate course e.g. MSc marketing, *University of Manchester*.

Student 2 decides to plough full steam ahead with a medicine application. They have two major options, both of which are full-time university courses; an undergraduate medicine and surgery degree or a graduate medicine and surgery degree completed after an undergraduate degree, normally in a life sciences field. There are no apprenticeship routes to medicine as far as we are aware.

Student 3 is now aware that they can become a professional quantity surveyor even though they have done humanities / social sciences AS Level. They could go in a number of different directions including:

- Advanced Apprenticeship in quantity surveying, e.g. *Chartered Surveyors Training Trust*
- Higher Apprenticeship in quantity surveying e.g. *Balfour Beatty*
- Degree in quantity surveying e.g. *Kingston*
- Degree in something else, e.g. politics and French at *Kent*, then MSc construction cost management at *Reading*.

If you are a sixth form student who can only relate to their current studies?

Let us look at two sixth form students who, when we ask about their abilities, interests, values and attitudes, can only relate to their sixth form studies:

Student 4 loves their economics A Level much more than their other subjects, is not doing maths A Level and is thinking about studying this at university. They are not aware of apprenticeship options. They could consider, for example:

- Advanced Apprenticeship in insurance e.g. *AON*
- Higher Apprenticeship in investment management e.g. *Investment2020*
- Degree in economics e.g. *Hull* (does not need maths A Level)
- Joint degree e.g. economics and politics (with placement year) at *Brunel*

Student 5 loves the idea of the university experience and history is their least worst A Level. They are happy to study history as it means they can go to university and leave home. The main ways forward would be degrees in history, though there are some apprenticeships such as *CILEX* (lawyer) that would use some of the research skills of a historian.

Where will I be?

Apprenticeships

You will probably be living at home, though there are some instances of going away such as: Merchant Navy e.g. *Clyde Marine Training*, *Network Rail* and some hospitality apprenticeships. Sometimes there may not be an appropriate apprenticeship in a particular locality.

Higher Education

While some students will still live at home and commute to a local university, many students will leave home and they will be supported in this transition by their university. There are increasing opportunities to study at a university abroad in many different ways such as a UK university with a foreign campus, a year abroad, or the whole university course studied at a foreign university in English.

How and when do I apply?

Apprenticeships

The application process is not easy. Sometimes you apply through the Government Apprenticeship Website (www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship) and sometimes you apply through company or training provider websites or a jobs board like Milkround School leavers. Opening and closing dates for applications can really vary and finding these out may involve some detailed research. It can often be helpful if you can seek advice from a Careers Adviser on available opportunities and how to apply.

Higher Education

You apply for UK courses through the clear and understandable UCAS process at www.ucas.com. As long as you make five realistic choices you should receive some offers. Schools and colleges are very comfortable with this process. There is a uniform series of opening and closing dates which are available to see on the UCAS website.

N.B You can apply for both apprenticeships and higher education at the same time, though it can be complicated keeping on top of everything!

Be aware of degree apprenticeships that are being developed. One that already exists is *Cap Gemini*, which you apply for through the company website.

How do I pay?

To put this into its simplest terms:

Higher Education – YOU PAY!

But what you pay back will depend on what you earn. It's basically a graduate tax and you don't pay upfront. Visit: www.gov.uk/student-finance

Apprenticeships – THEY PAY!

There is a national minimum wage for apprentices, but many are paid more. You also get holiday pay and your courses are paid for. Visit: www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide

Why should I consider apprenticeships?

If you know a career area that interests you, there is a strong possibility that there is an apprenticeship that will be an excellent route into this career. Some employers will consider apprenticeships as the main route into their employment roles! Some employers will support you through your training to the highest professional levels that can be achieved.

Why should I consider Higher Education?

You want the “gold-standard higher education experience”:

- Possibly leave home
- Live in halls of residence
- Meet new people and have a great social life
- Study something you enjoy
- Possibly be in a better position regarding employability
-

Many people will say that going to university were the best years of their lives! If this is what you genuinely want, then do it!

However

The only assumption we should perhaps look at here is the employability one. Some careers require a university degree, some will have to be done full-time at university, currently virtually all research physicists have studied physics full-time at university and this may always be the case. Some degrees could be done through an apprenticeship though and in the future there will be a growth in degree apprenticeships, such as those through the *Tech Partnership* in IT.

Many professional, management, technical and skilled roles will be achievable through starting on an Advanced, Higher or Degree Apprenticeship.

Individual sixth form students need to be honest with themselves about why they are making their choices. If employability is your main concern then it is crucial that you consider the apprenticeship route!

Researching your Higher Education options

Your research timetable for Spring and Summer 2016

The final national deadline for sending off your UCAS Apply ('Apply' is the actual area on the UCAS website where you actually complete the on-line application) is mid-January 2017 but the JFS deadline is in November 2016. That's light years away, isn't it? And there are so many other things to bother about: catching up on coursework, exams, keeping your part-time job... But don't forget that there is work to be done preparing for your higher education application, and it will involve research, planning and organisation.

You will need to complete your UCAS Apply in September/November 2016 (the earlier UCAS* receives it, the earlier the universities will get it, the earlier you may get decisions). At that stage, *you have to get it right*. You cannot change your UCAS Apply application once the School has sent it to UCAS, (though there is a facility for adding additional choices).

Here are the main issues to think about at this time:

- **Are you going to apply at all?** It may be best to go through the whole process and apply – you can always withdraw later. This is better than making a last-minute, rushed application.
- **Your choice of course** Are you happy studying one of your current subjects or do you want to start something new? Have you a career in mind which requires a vocational degree? What about studying more than one subject as part of a joint, combined or modular degree?
- **Your choice of university** The big issue for many is whether to stay at home or not. There are pros and cons either way and, if you cannot decide, you can mix your choices. Also, look at different types of university in terms of campus, city or small town, old or new, large or small.
- **Your personal statement** This is an important part of the UCAS Application. Some students write as many as ten drafts before they are satisfied with their efforts, so it is good to start working on this in early summer. Look at sections **Making your application – personal statement**

Things to do in the Spring Term:

- get advice;
- start your higher education research (for example, look at prospectuses and websites)
- apply to attend higher education summer schools of interest;
- organise a work-experience placement, especially important for certain degrees (for example, medicine or social work).

Things to do in the Summer Term:

- get advice;
- attend university open days;
- work on your choices of course and university;
- draft your personal statement.

By **early July**, you should have narrowed down your choices of course and university to a short list, and have a nearly-completed draft of your personal statement

Individual interviews with Andy Gardner or Mrs Silverstone began in February for Year 12 students.
Book your session via Mrs Silverstone in the Study Room

* UCAS –the intermediary between applicants and their intended institutions of higher education.

JFS Higher Education applications process

This brief guide supports the wide-ranging information which you will receive from the Higher Education guidance team at various special seminars and assemblies. Mr Flack, the sixth form management team, your tutor and our HE/Careers Adviser, Andy Gardner, together with Mrs Silverstone, are the people to consult directly over further queries.

The Application Process - Timetable at JFS

Year 12

February Introductory Higher Education Seminar and talks by visiting university speakers
HE Advice meetings with Andy Gardner and Mrs Silverstone begin. You will be able to discuss your prospective choice of courses and universities with our specialist advisers. These sessions will continue right through to October.

March/April Oxbridge applicants preparation sessions.

6 April **Alumni Day** at JFS. Talks from a range of former JFS students now at university about their institution and subject decisions.

14- 17 June **'Futures' Week** at JFS. A vast range of activities including:

- **UCAS Applications Seminar:** How to apply and how to complete the UCAS form; predicted grades explained; the advantages and disadvantages of applying after 'A' Level/CACHE results
- All students to complete **draft UCAS Apply** - draft personal statement and general subject choices only
- All students will also need to complete the **yellow Profile Booklet** which will assist with reference writing
- Campus Preparation Event
- Oxbridge and Medicine applicants have further specific preparation activities and preliminary interviews with Ms Mellor, Andy Gardner and one of our team of specialist subject staff
- Taster courses; subject-based seminars (in school), personal statement masterclasses, open day visits, interview practice; non – Higher Education options explained.

Year 13 – Autumn Term deadlines

Monday 19 September **JFS deadline for submission of Oxbridge and Medicine applications.**

Monday 17 October **JFS deadline for high demand subject applications (e.g. Law, History, English).**

October – November **All other applicants for university to finalise choices and complete application forms. The earlier the better!**

Friday 4 November **JFS deadline for all UCAS applications.**

Art Foundation course applicants complete choices and submit applications by **Friday 4 November.**

Oxbridge and Medicine/Dentistry applicants will have a special programme in the Autumn Term to help them prepare for pre-admissions tests and interviews and each will be assigned a specific teacher mentor.

Research using the internet

Applying to University

www.ucas.com – this site, apart from providing the electronic means of applying (Apply), has everything both a student and their adviser could need (course search, finance information for starters) with good links to every university site

www.university.which.co.uk - many students prefer this to UCAS course search.

www.push.co.uk - written by students

What to study?

www.ukcoursefinder.co.uk

www.bestcourse4me.com

Where to go?

www.ucas.com – course search and institution guide.

www.university.which.co.uk

www.unistats.direct.gov.uk – the official higher education course comparison website

www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk - league tables.

www.push.co.uk – written by students.

www.opendays.com – university and college open day directory.

University prospectus websites – N.B. the printed prospectus can be out of date so always check the university website.

Admissions Tests

www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/entry-requirements/admissions-tests

Work/Apprenticeships after sixth form

www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship

www.schoolleavers.milkround.com

www.allaboutschoolleavers.co.uk

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

Graduate employment

www.prospects.ac.uk – go to ‘careers advice’, then ‘what can I do with my degree?’

www.bestcourse4me.com

Gap Year

www.gapyear.com

www.yini.org.uk – Year in Industry paid work placements before university.

www.vinspired.com

www.studentladder.co.uk

Study Abroad

www.erasmusplus.org.uk

www.fulbright.co.uk – USA.

Finance

www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/finance-and-support

www.gov.uk/student-finance

www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/

FRONTER

See ‘Futures’ section on Fronter for further information and suggestions.

Higher Education Library

A wide range of prospectuses, ‘Good University’ guides and UCAS publications is available for reference in the Sixth Form Study Room.

JFS ALUMNI DAY – Making the most of this day

On **Wednesday 6 April 2016**, around 50 to 60 JFS alumni who are currently in their first, second or third years at a wide range of universities will be back at JFS to talk to you about university. How do you get the best from this event?

- 1) Research beforehand about courses/ institutions so that you can sign up in advance for the sessions most useful to you.
- 2) Make notes at each session. During the event you will be able to attend talks on two universities and on the broad course area you are interested in.
- 3) Have some questions ready to ask about any of the following:

Possible questions to ask

- Can I expect an interview?
- What kind of questions come up at interview? (also see the JFS university interviews guide)
- What A-level points or grades do I need to get on to the course?
- What is the workload like on your course?
- What are the study facilities like?
- How is students' work assessed?
- What was settling in like?
- What range of accommodation exists? What would it cost?
- How do you manage the money side of things?
- What is the social life like? What is Jewish life on campus like?

A further way of getting information is to attend a UCAS Higher Education Fair, however, these are perhaps less useful than talking directly to alumni from your school combined with actually visiting a range of universities in the summer / early autumn of 2016.

Open Days: what to look for?

It is essential to check out the lie of the land before you make your application. After all, you are going to spend at least three years of your life at one of these institutions – you don't want a rude awakening in October 2017!

Although it is true that you have until next Spring to see the five institutions you have chosen on your UCAS Apply, the best advice is to try to see some of them in the summer term 2015. The summer term is "the season" as far as organised open days are concerned (with a few in spring and September).

It would be impossible to visit every university in which you have an interest, so try to see a good cross-section. For example, choose one close to home and one in another city with a campus, or contrast old with new and large with small. This way, you will get a snapshot of the range of universities and colleges on offer.

Get details of when open days are being held – you will find the information in prospectuses or on university websites. For some, you may have to book in advance; for others, you may be able simply to turn up. Those institutions which do not have formal open days may be happy to arrange a visit for you. You may be able to see a department of your choice and talk to the admissions tutor or students. Don't be afraid to pick up the phone and arrange this.

What you should gain from an open day is an overall impression of the place. Possibly, you will get an instinctive "gut feeling" which you can rely on when you come to make your choices.

Checklist of what to look out for at an Open Day

- Are the module options/course content/exam structure what you want?
- What are the facilities like (this is especially important in a practical subject, such as engineering, or a lab-based science)?
- Did you get positive information on graduate career opportunities?
- Try to see the accommodation. Will you be given university accommodation in your first year? What is the cost?
- Was the open day well organised? Were you made welcome?
- Were the lectures interesting or deadly dull?
- Were the undergraduate students you met enthusiastic about the place?
- Could you see yourself here? Does the prospect feel exciting?

www.opendays.com

JFS Procedure for attending Open Days

- The School will organise visits to two institutions. For all other open days you will need to go independently. In the summer term the School allows each student to attend three open days outside of any organised visit.
- You must ensure that your parent(s) / guardian(s) notify the School in advance of the open day by sending an email to sixthformattendance@jfs.brent.sch.uk. Start checking now which open days you would like to attend.

NB: Parents and Open Days!

While many students have traditionally travelled independently or with friends to open days, universities now provide increasingly sophisticated and comprehensive parents' sessions within their open day programmes.

JFS Alumni Day – 6 April 2016

Remember our yearly Alumni event. During the applications process, if you have a particular query about an aspect of a course or a feature of a university that you cannot find an answer to, ask one of our team and we will invariably find a former student who can help.

Making your Higher-Education choices

Choosing a subject

There are thousands of different higher-education courses at hundreds of institutions. However, the system you use to narrow down your choices can be relatively simple.

Initially, you have to ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you interested in continuing to study something that you enjoyed at A Level/Diploma?
- Do you want to do something that leads to a certain career?
- Do you want to study something new that you feel you might be very interested in?

Remember, also, that there are different types of degree available – single, joint or triple honours, etc. Now look at the two examples here. The first is very straightforward, the second less so.

Example 1

You enjoy and you are doing very well in Maths A Level, you do not have a definite career idea yet and you are not interested in studying anything new. You have looked at related degrees such as Economics, Computing and Management Studies, but you feel that you would just like to take the maths to a higher level at university.

Example 2

You are doing Politics A Level with English and History. You feel that your strengths are very much in the essay-based subjects. You are thinking about studying Politics with Philosophy and you may want to become a Solicitor.

Example 2 encompasses all three strands of our model. You would be carrying on with the Politics; you would be able to enter your chosen career after doing a GDL (Graduate Diploma in Law) Conversion Course; and you would pick up a new subject that you think would interest you. It is probable that you had been thinking about doing a law degree, but you realized that it was very important which university you went to, and that it would be easier to get in to do Politics and Philosophy than Law.

Choosing a subject based on your A levels

- Be aware that there will be marked differences in content between the degree course and the A Level of the same subject. For example, an economics degree will involve far more statistics; a biology degree will include far more chemistry.
- Some arts subjects, such as English, are competitive. A*AA-ABB is often the offer from many traditional universities. Could you get what you want from a degree out of some other subject, such as Philosophy, Cultural Studies, American Studies or Modern European Studies?
- Some of these might consider you with ABB or less. Science degrees, on the other hand, in subjects related to A Levels (Chemistry, Physics, Biology and Maths) can be more flexible in their entry requirements, especially at the clearing stage!
- Even if you do a degree based on a subject that you did at A Level, it is still important to look at the career implications.

Choosing a subject based on your career ideas

- Some careers require a specific degree (for example, pharmacy) while others will accept a degree in any subject (for example, chartered accountancy, retail management) and others can accept a graduate conversion course (for example, surveying)
- If you are going to do a degree that is specific to a particular career, then it must match your own personal profile. Does it reflect your interests, does it suit your abilities, does it accord with your values and attitudes? To find out, do some research: get some work experience; talk to people working in the career area; find information in libraries and on the internet.
- What if you change your mind? How easy will it be to gain entry to another career field? This will vary, but very often core skills gained in one degree can be useful for another career area.

Choosing a subject based on a new interest

- These subjects can be split into two different categories: degrees with no obvious career link; degrees with a career link.
- Examples of degrees with no obvious career link include Anthropology, Philosophy and Classics. You will find out about these courses through prospectuses, suggested further reading and any personal interests you may have. People often worry about the employment prospects of graduates in these subjects; in fact, their levels of employment tend to be the same as for other non-vocational graduates.
- Examples of degrees with a career link include Psychology (although only a minority of these graduates become professional psychologists) and Media Studies (although these graduates are in no way guaranteed a job in the media). You must be keen to study these subjects because you are very interested in the content of the course. What may follow in terms of a career is a bonus.

Sometimes people use university as a means to leave home or delay full-time work. This is fine up to a point. However, if you are seriously considering moving on to higher education, you must be able to place yourself in one of the following three categories.

- You know your academic strengths (and these have been confirmed by exam results or teachers opinions) and you would like to carry on a particular subject at university.
- You have a career idea that matches your interests, abilities, values and attitudes.
- You have developed an interest in a new subject that matches your interests, abilities, values and attitudes.

If none of these categories relates to you, then you should think very carefully about your next steps. Also, why burden yourself with a Student Loan in order to take a course that you are not interested in!

Finally, because everybody's situation is different and it is hard to generalise, it is always best to seek personal guidance relating to your particular situation. Talk to, in the first instance, your form tutor or to subject teachers.

Narrowing down your choices

How do you narrow down your choices to the five courses on your UCAS Apply? The main factors to consider are: course content; your predicted grades; the reputation of the university/college; the location of the university/college. Also, do consider the popularity of the course that you may apply for. Some courses are so popular that they are looking for reasons to reject you due to sheer numbers applying.

Course content

Many degrees will be very similar from one university to another, *either* because they have to meet the requirements of professional bodies (for example, Law, Medicine, Psychology, Electrical Engineering, etc), *or* because past practice has led to degrees in certain fields having similar content (for example, Business and Management Studies).

When course content is fairly similar, it might be worth looking into the methods of assessment the university uses (exams, assessments, modules) as a means of narrowing down your choices. Different methods of assessment suit different people. This information through Unistats or Which? University.

On the other hand, some degrees with the same title can vary greatly in content (for example, Geography, History, Media Studies and Languages). You should study the course information in depth to make sure that you will be getting what you want.

Some courses provide variety through the range of available options. Some universities have an in-built system to give you a range of choice, for example through faculties or schools.

Predicted grades!

Your subject teachers will be asked to submit provisional predicted grades in June-July of Year 12. You cannot realistically apply for courses that require, say, AAA grades at A Level if your predictions are CCC.

However, the School does update predictions before your final school UCAS interview, so there is time for most students, through hard work and demonstrable improvement, to raise predictions. In particular, good modular results or good AS results may lead subject teachers to review your predictions.

Predicted grades will be shared with you but nobody will succumb to pressure to raise predictions if this is unrealistic. Falsely optimistic predictions are not in anyone's interest.

Universities state their entrance requirements for each course in their prospectuses (published March-May 2016 for entry in 2017). To understand the way entrance requirements are set, see section **Understanding the language of universities**. You need to make sure that your predicted grades match or are near the requirements for your chosen course.

Predicted grades are based on: your GCSE results; your AS-Level and module results at the end of Year 12; your overall performance in the Sixth Form. Schools are now good at predicting the right grades for students, so you have to trust them. If schools get them wrong, it is normally because they have made the predictions too high.

The more popular the degree course you apply for, the higher your predicted grades will need to be. For example, some English and Law and all Medicine and Veterinary Science will normally be looking for at least AAA and sometimes A*AA. If you are not predicted to get these grades then your application will probably be unsuccessful.

Predictions are only valid for this year and become irrelevant as soon as your results are known. If you do get higher grades than predicted, you will be free to apply again next year or to reject any offers that you may have and apply through **Clearing**. There is also **Adjustment** where you can hold your offers but look for choices with better results than you were expecting.

Some universities will offer applicants an alternative course if they feel they cannot make the student an offer for their original choice. Some universities and courses also consider GCSE grades and will only make offers to students with a certain numbers of A or A* grades. (Medicine at Birmingham is a particular example here.)

It is important that you are fully aware of what will and will not be open to you. A student predicted to get AAB will have different options to the student predicted BCC.

Reputation

The best sources of real information on courses, without any marketing spin, are the Unistats and Which? University websites which have information on student satisfaction, what UCAS Tariff Points their students really get and what sort of jobs their students go onto (unistats).

Choosing a university: location

With over 300 institutions to choose from, how do you narrow it down to just five for the UCAS Apply (or four if you are applying to study Medicine, Veterinary Science or Dentistry)? Obviously, you must pick the most suitable courses, but location and the type of university (redbrick, campus, etc.) are also worth considering. Cost, in particular, may be an issue. Here are some other points to think about.

- **Should you stay at home in London or not?**

Some *advantages* are that you will be close to family, friends, part-time work and all things familiar. It could also be cheaper if you are living at home. Some *disadvantages* are that you might miss out on a slice of independence, you will be commuting to college, and your existence will be very similar to school sixth-form life. Remember: London is one of the most expensive cities in Europe and you are not immune, even if you are not paying rent.

- **If you go away, how far is it from London?**

Here are some examples:

50 miles	Sussex, Kent, Oxford
100 miles	Birmingham, Leicester, Bristol
200 miles	Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, York
400+ miles	Anywhere in Scotland or Northern Ireland

Obviously, the further away you are, the more difficult and expensive it is to return to London for weekends, but the cost of living away from London is often a lot cheaper.

- **City or countryside?**

Another city (although none are as large as London) may have similar facilities to those you are used to. On the other hand, you may want something very different, such as green fields and sheep!

- **Large or small?**

Some universities have over 15,000 students, others have 6,000. Colleges of higher education are often small, with a friendly, personal atmosphere.

- **How cosmopolitan will it be?**

Remember that we are used to a multicultural environment in London and not everywhere will be the same.

- **Is it a campus?**

Campus universities have all their facilities on one site (teaching, living, cafes, shops). Some examples are Essex, Sussex and Warwick. It can be handy but some find the idea claustrophobic.

- **New or old?**

Do your architectural surroundings matter to you? Some institutions are centuries old, others were built in the 1960s, some are new.

- **Sundry issues**

There may be any number of personal preferences which will influence your choice. What is the ratio of males to females? Is accommodation provided or do you have to find it yourself? Do you like the local football team?

Important points to remember

- You have five choices (four, in some cases) so you can mix and match to keep your options open.
- Going to university is a big opportunity to strike out on your own without breaking links with home (the academic year is generally only thirty weeks, so you have long holidays at home).
- If you are not a geography expert, take advice about where places are and, more importantly, how accessible they are.
- Some universities have several sites and separate franchised colleges, often miles apart. Make sure that you know which site your course is being taught at and that you are happy about the location.
- Remember that, generally, there are excellent transport links from London and that travelling time is often more important than distance.
- Do try to visit some universities so that you gain a more rounded view than you get from the prospectus, and do try to speak to students already there.

Good News! The advent of tuition fees of circa £9000 per annum and a demographic dip in the birthrate means that, for many courses, the recent inflation in terms of offers has turned around.

We have noticed that some universities are more willing to offer a place in August if one grade has been missed. (or sometimes two or three!)

Jewish Life at University

As well as a chance to get a degree, work hard and make your family proud, university is also a great place to meet people and be a part of a new community. The Jewish opportunities are no different.

From the most involved to the least involved Jewish students at university will have chances to be part of the Jewish student community. Each university has a few must meet Jews:

University Jewish Chaplaincy

These carefully selected husband and wife teams are available 24/7 to offer practical, welfare, spiritual, educational support, guidance and encouragement to all Jewish students irrespective of background and affiliation.

Whatever your need – your Chaplains are there for you. Whether it be a friendly face when you first arrive on campus, a traditional home-cooked Friday night dinner, someone to talk to, social events, educational opportunities or representation to the Universities. You can find out more about what UJC offer by visiting www.mychaplaincy.co.uk

JSoc (Jewish Society)

There are more than fifty JSocs on campuses across the UK, with memberships ranging from single figures to almost a thousand and they are there to cater for all your Jewish needs. Cultural and social opportunities are at the centre of what JSocs do as well as protecting Jewish students and being the voice of Israel on campus.

JSocs are run by volunteer committee members and once you get involved you can have the chance to lead the JSoc from chairing the entire committee to working on events or education. Whatever you do signing up to JSoc is a 'Freshers' Week' must, if only for the freebies and the promise of chicken soup throughout the year.

JSocs are affiliated to the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) which represents Jewish students to the Jewish and wider community as well as giving support to individual JSocs. You can find out more about what JSocs offer by visiting www.ujs.org.uk

UJS Hillel

UJS Hillel provide a network of facilities across the UK from residential accommodation with amenities for non-residents, to a growing network of non-residential Jewish student centres. Students can enjoy a wide range of activities or just enjoy a place to meet friends.

All these organisations will be happy to tell you about how they operate in different areas of the country. Each university community is different and it is worth making an informed decision knowing what aspects of Jewish life will be available. Jewish student communities are famed for their breadth and the ability for everyone to be included. Wherever you choose to go there'll be a JSoc waiting for you to join and students wanting to have you to their Shabbat table. You can find out more about what UJS Hillel offer by visiting <http://www.ujscampusguide.co.uk/what-are-jewish-spaces.html>

Making sure that you are doing the right A Levels

You will soon be reaching the point where you have to decide which of your A Levels you are *not* going to continue with. Your decision will have a bearing on your higher-education options so it is important to think carefully. Also, there are a number of misconceptions about what is the best thing to do. You need to take the following points into account.

Your grades at AS Level

If your AS-Level results are AAAE, then it is fairly obvious which one of your subjects you should drop. Your strengths seem to be in the three subjects that you got AAA in. For most people, things will be less clear-cut than this. Nevertheless, AS results can be a clear indicator as to what to do.

Career or university entrance requirements

If you have a firm idea about the career or university course you want to apply for, then you must make sure that you are taking the appropriate A Levels. For example, some medicine degrees require Biology at A Level, while others will accept an AS Level in Biology. Some engineering degrees will consider you with an AS in Physics, while others will only look at you if you have Physics at A Level. – Ensure you meet the university entry requirements.

Enjoyment of subjects

Surely one of the most important reasons for carrying on with a subject is that you enjoy it. Do consider, however, whether you will enjoy it so much when it becomes more difficult at A2 Level.

Teachers' advice

Your teachers will have seen how you have coped with your AS Levels for a year and will be able to offer advice about whether you should carry on with the A Level. Some students may have done well enough to do four A Levels. Others may have done enough to progress with their A Levels, but find they have two or more teachers recommending that they drop their particular subject. In this instance, the decision on which A Level to discontinue may have to be made by your Head of Year.

Students taking three AS Levels

Some students may be taking three AS Levels only, having dropped one already. There are a number of possible solutions. How can I achieve maximum results for myself? If I know what I want to do, what do I need to get in? Above all, do the research!

'AS' Level Results and Guidance

'AS' Results are published on Thursday 18 August 2016. JFS will advise you in the summer of the time you may collect your results. Monday 7 September is devoted to guiding you about the most suitable A Level choices to make. You have to pass an 'AS' Level in order to carry on with that A Level.

Making Your Application

The language of universities

Understanding university entrance requirements

When you are applying for a course, the big issue for you is: “What do I need to get in?” Unfortunately, you could well get three different answers from the universities.

- **Some universities make offers based on A-Level grades.**

The most common method. To take an example, you might be applying to study Geography and the university wants AAB in A Level results.

- **Some universities make offers based on the UCAS tariff.**

According to this method, numerical values are given to the qualifications that you take in the Sixth Form. The higher the grades you get, the more points you get.

www.ucas.com/advisers/guides-and-resources/tariff-2017

- **Some universities make offers based on the tariff, but you have to achieve certain grades and/or certain subjects within this.**

It looks likely that the more traditional universities will be basing their entrance requirements on A-Level grades, while the modern universities will be using the tariff. Some traditional universities (for example, Aston and Kent) have been using the tariff, but often with specific ALevel requirements.

- **Websites and prospectuses usually have clear information about required grades, typical offers, course requirements and preferred or essential subjects.**

Do check also that you have any specific GCSE required (eg UCL – for any undergraduate course – now requires at least a grade C in a modern foreign language).

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "UCAS - Personal details - Windows Internet Explorer provided by JFS School (Office User)". The address bar shows the URL "http://www.ucas.com/guidetour/english/personaldetails". The page content includes a "2012 apply" logo, a "Personal details" heading, and a "Welcome" message. A navigation menu on the left lists sections: Welcome, Personal details (selected), Choices, Education, Employment, Statement, Reference, Pay/Send, View all details, Help, and Options/Opsiyau. The main content area contains instructions: "Some of these details have been copied automatically from the information given when you first registered." and "Compulsory fields are marked with an asterisk (*)". Below this, there are several form fields for personal information, including Title*, Gender*, First/given name(s)*, Surname/family name*, Preferred first name, Previous surname at 16th birthday, and Postal address*. A "Go" button is visible at the bottom right of the form area. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows several open applications, including "UCAS - Appl...", "Register: W...", "UCAS - Per...", and "Delete a file ...". The system tray shows the time as 13:57.

Types of Higher Education Course

Degrees can have different titles such as:

Bachelor of Arts	BA
Bachelor of Science	BSc
Master of Arts	MA
Master of Science	MSc
Bachelor of Engineering	BEng
Master of Engineering	MEng
Bachelor of Laws	LLB
Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery	MB BS

As a general rule of thumb, a bachelor's degree is normally three years long and a master's degree is normally four years long.

Types of degree by content:

- Single subject – Bsc in Geology
- Equal combination – Mathematics and Management Studies
- Major-minor combination – Mathematics with Management Studies
- Triple combinations – Philosophy, Psychology and Physiology
- Cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary – can take a wide range of courses across a range of disciplines to build up a degree programme e.g. BA Economic and Social Studies.

Foundation Degrees

- Normally two years long
- Work and career related
- Can be studied at the university or a local franchised further education college
- An optional top-up year will convert qualification to an honours degree
- Gradually replacing Higher National Diplomas
- This course is often marketed at non-traditional Higher Education applicants such as Adults.
- Courses are listed in UCAS course search.

Sandwich Degrees (normally 4 years)

- Could contain a single (thick) 12 month work placement, or two (thin) 6 month work placements
- Placement is normally paid work
- Sometimes placements are found for the student, sometimes they have to find them themselves.

Extended Degrees

- Offer an initial preliminary year at college and are common in engineering and science.
- There are a few art and design courses, which are offered as an alternative to Art Foundation.
- Preliminary years for medicine offer an alternative route but will still want very high A Level grades.

Making your application

The personal statement

Preparing your UCAS personal statement

The personal statement is your invaluable opportunity to influence the admissions tutors in your favour and to convince them that they should offer you a place. It is especially important when applying for competitive and vocational courses.

The statement is likely to be between 350 and 550 words long (4000 characters – 47 lines). We strongly advise you to get it prepared early.

What do admissions tutors look for in a personal statement?

There are three main areas:

- evidence of motivation and interest in your chosen subject;
- evidence of ability and interest in your current studies;
- evidence of interests outside of your studies.

There is no right or wrong way to express all this, as long as you do so in a clear, keen, positive way.

Here are some hints to help get you thinking.

- **Your choice of course**
You need to explain your reasons for choosing this course at university, and the background to your interest in the subject. This is the section that admissions tutors are most interested in, so it usually forms at least the opening paragraph. Remember: *what* do you want to study? *why* do you want to study it? what *evidence* have you got that proves this?
- **Your current studies**
You need to include here any particular interests you have in your current studies – that is, evidence that you *enjoy* aspects of study.
- **About you**
What do you do outside of your studies? What makes you tick? You can include here any sporting, social or other activities.

How to go about it

- Start by making a list of points you would like to include under the above headings. Use a friend/someone at home/member of staff to bounce ideas off.
- Next, turn these points into sentences, then paragraphs.
- Eventually, it should all flow together and make you sound interesting!
- Do not repeat information (for example, your name, subjects) which is evident from the other parts of the UCAS Apply.

Some ideas about what to include: sports (playing/watching); work experience (part-time, voluntary); field courses; summer schools; lectures; conferences; university visits; book/magazine articles you have read; politics/current affairs; environmental issues; music (playing/listening); travel (done/planned); career ideas. Always link any extra-curricular experience to the course you are applying for – what skills have you learnt? The School will provide considerable advice and support as you prepare your Statement. However, it must be YOUR own work.

Personal statements: subject-specific advice

Below is a list of subjects with specific advice about how to get started on a personal statement.

Architecture Ideas to include: visits to modern and historical sites; work experience in an architect's office; evidence of reading on the history of architecture; your preferences among twentieth-century architects; your favourite building and why. For more ideas, visit www.greatbuildings.com

Business/management/finance Read *The Economist* and the business pages of the broadsheet newspapers, watch relevant documentaries. You will need to show: evidence of coping with a wide variety of subjects; evidence of interest in economics, finance, marketing, human resources and IT; a high level of numeracy; evidence of working in teams on projects. Business students could identify specific examples they have done in their course. It is a good idea to focus on some particular economics issues, for example, EMU, the credit crunch, the growth of E-commerce.

Computing/IT Courses can vary in their content, so make sure you know what you are applying for. Some courses will be concerned about your maths ability, some may be more concerned about design or business skills. Try to think about all the experience you have had with computers and programming, inside and outside of school. What did you learn from it?

Education/teacher training Include your work experience/observation in schools and describe what you learned from it (for example, mixed-ability teaching, testing, special needs). Mention any work with young people and what problems you encountered.

Engineering The purpose of engineering is the design and manufacture of the "hardware" of life. Show evidence that you can relate maths and physics to a "hardware" issue (for example, relating the study of electricity in physics to how a car ignition works). Write about an engineering issue that interests you.

English Reading beyond the syllabus is essential. Write about your favourite authors, poets and dramatists and why you like them. Mention theatre visits. Show that you understand the link between literature and history (through knowledge of a historical setting). Most degrees are literature based, so do not go on about creative writing or journalism too much.

Geography Describe visits or field trips to any specific region. Read geographical magazines and describe any special interests you have and why. Show an awareness of world issues and an interest in your own locality.

History You need to show a passion for the past above and beyond school work. Prove it by writing about books and magazines on history, saying why they interest you. Show an interest in the wide range of history – not just Europe between the wars! If you have a joint interest in history and literature, exploit it.

Languages/European studies Include visits to relevant countries, noting the cultural and geographical features of the region visited. Give evidence of your interest in the language, history and literature related to that language. It is a good idea to read newspapers, magazines and websites in the appropriate language.

Law Visit law courts and take notes on cases heard. Follow legal arguments in the press. Read law sections in broadsheet newspapers. Read *Learning the Law* by Glanville Williams or *Understanding the Law* by Geoffrey Rivlin. Some admissions tutors are more concerned about your commitment to law as an academic discipline rather than a career. Include evidence of work experience/work shadowing/career research.

Mathematics Include anything that proves your love of maths: wider reading, entering competitions, maths clubs. Mention other interests related to maths, such as IT, chess or philosophy. Explain how you would like to use your maths degree in your future career. Include any evidence of maths that you have had to learn by yourself, or maths problems you have solved through determination.

Media Describe work experience/shadowing and what you learned from it (for example, job roles, how media organizations differ). Include evidence that you have shown initiative outside of the syllabus (for example, creating your own website). Show that your reasons for applying correspond to the content of the course, and that you are not just doing it to get a job in the media.

Medicine/dentistry/veterinary science *Don't let your desire to have lots of interesting things to say on your personal statement get in the way of your studies – you will need very high grades indeed!* Admissions tutors are looking for evidence of: work experience and what you learned from it; scientific interest; interest in the welfare of others; communication skills; stability and stickability. Try to gain a more in-depth knowledge of one or two medical issues outside of your syllabus (for example, about the roles of health professionals, or social factors which influence health and disease). Think about which disease interests you most and why?

Music/drama Even though you may have an audition, most universities will take your talent as a given and are more concerned with your interest in the academic issues. They are looking for evidence of intellectual curiosity and an interest in the cultural background and construction of the subject matter. Therefore wider reading and concert and theatre visits are essential.

Natural sciences (biochemistry, biology, chemistry and physics) Show that your interest in your natural science goes beyond your A level, through wider reading of scientific journals, for example. Become more knowledgeable on one or two issues. Say what have you enjoyed most in your relevant A levels and why. Relate something you have learned to a practical use. Find out more about the careers these degrees can lead to (all the relevant institutes have careers sections on their websites).

Professions allied to medicine (speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, radiography, dietetics and nursing) Admissions tutors are looking for evidence of: work experience and what you learned from it; scientific interest; interest in the welfare of others; communication skills; stability and stickability. Try to gain a more in-depth knowledge of one or two medical issues outside of your syllabus (for example, about the roles of health professionals, or social factors which influence health and disease). Make it clear that you understand the differences between a physiotherapist, occupational therapist and speech therapist.

Social sciences (Politics, Psychology, Sociology) You need to show evidence of; reading current affairs avidly; wider reading that shows an interest in society, political issues and human behaviour; an understanding of how these are all interrelated. If you have not studied the subject before, provide evidence of reading an introductory book (especially for psychology). If you have studied the subject before, then identify something in the syllabus and say why it interests you.

Sport and physical education You need to be clear about what sort of course you are applying for. Most sports courses will be looking for evidence of interest in Physiology, Psychology, Sports Performance, Coaching and the business and administration of sport.

FINAL POINT! There will be specific sessions of advice from visiting university speakers in June of Year 12 about how to write your personal statement so make sure you take notes!

Making Your Application

Completing your UCAS Apply

Applicants use the web-based UCAS APPLY system. A special seminar on 'How to Apply' is given in late June and Mr Flack, Ms Mason, Mr Raine and your tutor can track your progress in completing it correctly throughout the process.

What you will need to know when you fill in the online UCAS APPLY

Make sure you have the following information to hand.

- Your school's buzzword - you will be told this at the June seminar.
- What London borough you live in.
- Your fee code (normally 02).
- Dates of your school attendance from the age of eleven (to the nearest month).
- Details of exams taken or to be taken (you will need to know the exam centre name and number, exam board and grade for each exam).
- Your personal statement (JFS will tell you how to place the statement on the form – make sure you find out).
- Payment details (pay by credit/debit card).
- Your five course choices (for each course you must know the course code and college code, which you can find in the course search section of the UCAS website).

Getting started

- Go to www.ucas.com and click on apply.
- Register using your school buzzword.
- You will then be issued with a user name and password. Do not lose this.

Making consistent choices

The following is an acceptable list of choices:

Electronic engineering	Brunel Uni
Electrical and electronic engineering	City
Electronic and electrical engineering	Surrey
Electronic and electrical engineering	QMUL
Electronic and electrical engineering	UCL

Why? Because nobody will be in any doubt about what you want to do and your personal statement will be straightforward in expressing your interest in engineering.

This is also acceptable:

English	Nottingham
English	Sussex
English and history	Leeds
English with history	Sheffield
English and history	Royal Holloway

Why? The core theme running through these choices is English. History is very compatible with English, so it will be perfectly easy to express your interest in your personal statement.

This is also acceptable:

Business and Management
Business studies
Business and Management
Business studies
Management studies

Brunel
City
Kings
Kingston
LSE

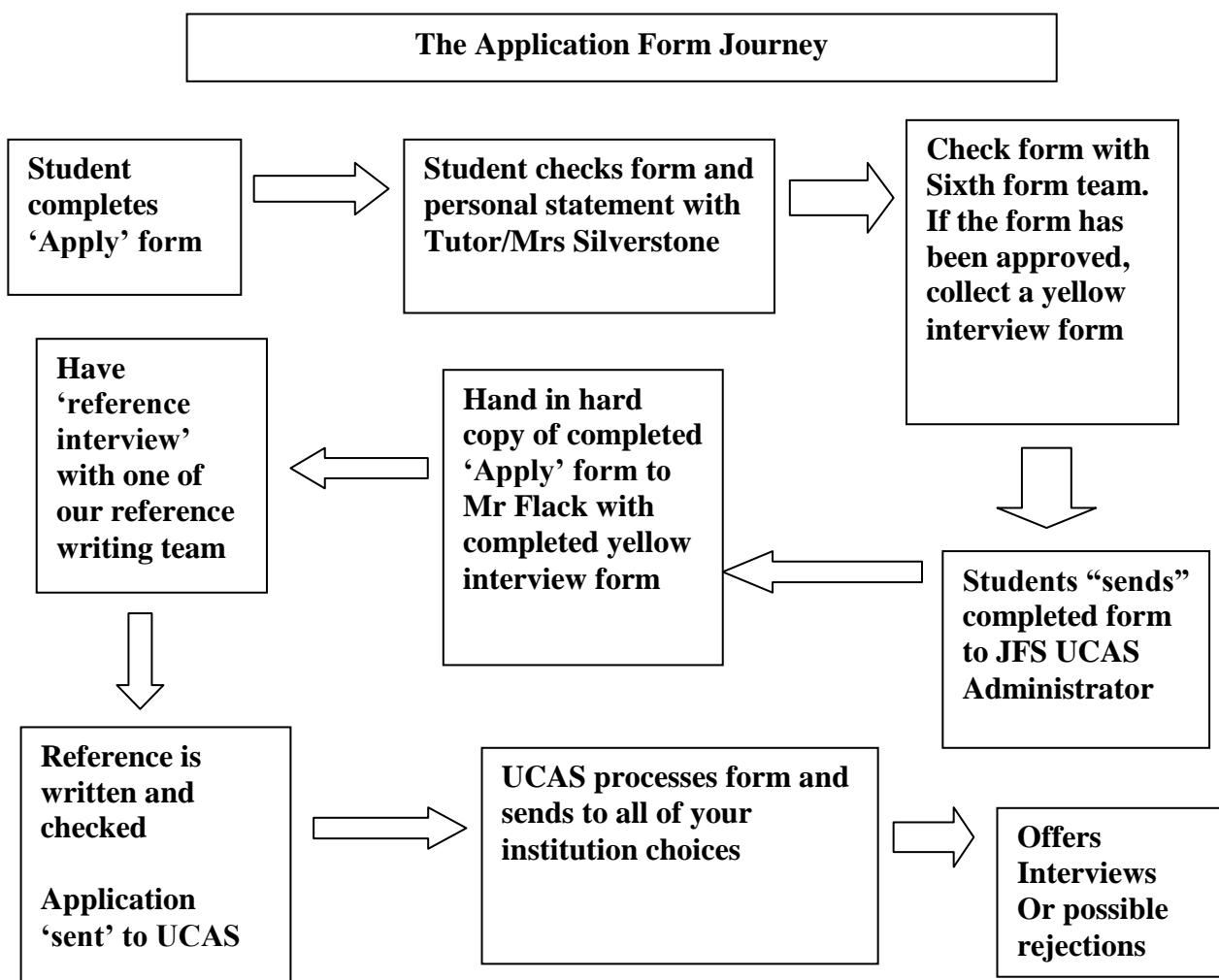
Why? Management and business studies are very similar, just with different titles. One of the few differences is that business studies courses are more likely to contain a sandwich year. In your personal statement it will be acceptable to say that you are interested in both business and management studies.

This is *not* acceptable:

Nursing
Philosophy
Nursing
Philosophy
Nursing

City
Heythrop College
Kings
Kings
Middlesex

Why? Not because you have applied for two courses at the same university, but because the admissions tutor would not know what you are most interested in doing. Do you want to spend the next three years of your life studying nursing or philosophy? It shows a lack of commitment to a particular subject, which will be obvious in your personal statement.



Interviews

The commonly held belief is that universities do not interview applicants much anymore. We would disagree with this view. While we accept that universities may be looking to reduce the number of applicants they see, interviews are still happening in large numbers and students should be prepared for them. In fact, in the case of degree courses that train for a specific career, applicants are highly likely to be interviewed. Some universities still interview *all* applicants who make it past the initial selection process. So whether you are applying to Imperial College or for Primary Teaching you could be interviewed.

General preparation and personal presentation

Points to remember

- The fact that you have been invited for an interview means that the university is interested in you, so that is half your battle won.
- In any interview, as in any conversation, there should be a two-way interaction. Make sure you participate and contribute.
- An interview can last anything between ten minutes and an hour.
- Interviews are usually conducted by one interviewer, but there could be two, three or even four of them.
- There is no such thing as the perfect interview.

Preparation

- Read carefully any material that is sent to you before the interview, so that you know what to expect when you get there.
- Reread the university prospectus and details about the course.
- Have a mock interview (JFS arranges these for you).
- Photocopy or print off your personal statement and reread this thoroughly before the interview.
- Prepare some questions you may want to ask. Make sure they have not already been answered in information you have been sent by the university.
- Plan your journey. If an overnight stay is involved, plan for this as well. Do *not* be late or in a rush.

Presentation

- If you are applying for a vocational degree (for example, medicine or hotel management) dress smartly and appropriately.
- For most degrees, dress in clothing that you feel comfortable with, and that will not distract the interviewer from the points you want to make.
- Do *not* chew gum – whatever course you are applying for!
- Think about what your body language is conveying. Do *not* sit slumped in your seat wearing a baseball cap! It is important to engage with the interviewer from the start.
- When it comes to handshakes, sitting down, starting to talk, and so on, take your lead from the interviewer.
- Work on making eye contact, regulating your voice levels and putting across an appropriate level of friendliness and warmth.

Preparing for interviews: your chosen subject

The greater part of an interview will be devoted to questions about the subject you have chosen. You need to think beforehand about the kinds of questions you will be asked, and how you will answer them. Remember that interviewers will be trying to discover:

- why you have applied for a particular course
- how much you already know about the subject you have chosen
- whether you have the aptitude and thinking skills to learn more
- whether you have thought about what the degree course will involve.

The *University Interviews Guide*, by Barbara Hamnett and Andy Gardner, has sample interview questions for a wide range of different subjects. This will help you to know what to expect and prompt you to start thinking. The new, third edition was published in 2013 by JFS.

Below is an extract from the book, showing some sample questions for **Architecture, English Psychology and Chemistry**.

Sample interview questions

- Are there any buildings that have particularly influenced you?
- Do you have a favourite contemporary architect? Who is it and why?
- Describe a building that you like, of any style or period.

- Which of Shakespeare's plays have you read, other than those you have studied at school?
- Choose a poem you have read and discuss its imagery, sentence structure, tone and meaning.
- When does satire become cynicism?

- Do you know what a psychology experiment is? Have you ever carried one out?
- Design a psychology experiment concerning colour blindness.
- What is perception?

- Draw some half-cells and discuss redox equilibria.
- What is special about transition metal compounds?
- What is the most recent chemistry experiment you have carried out? Describe it.

Most degree subjects have a list of sample questions in the book. JFS usually provides candidates with a copy of the relevant page(s) for you, on request.

Responding to offers from UCAS

All the universities and colleges on your UCAS Apply entry have to make a decision one way or the other about whether to make you an offer. Once all the institutions on your list have come to a decision, UCAS will inform you through the on-line UCAS Track service, detailing the offers you have been made.

At this stage, you have to make some crucial decisions about which offers to accept. Consider your replies very carefully. The decisions you make now are binding – you cannot change your mind at a later stage, for example when your results come out in August.

What you need to know

- The only *official* offers are those sent to you by UCAS through Track. Any verbal or written offers from individual institutions cannot be considered as confirmed until you have heard from UCAS.
- You may receive offers without interviews but, if you do, you will almost certainly be invited to open days. You may well want to attend an open day before deciding whether to accept an offer.
- Your offers will almost certainly be conditional on your A-Level or Diploma results. Conditions may be stated in terms of exam grades or as a tariff score (see the tariff table in section **Making your application –the language of universities**). An offer may include conditions about GCSE maths or GCSE English language.
- There are three responses you can make to the offers you receive:
 - Firm acceptance
 - Insurance acceptance
 - Decline all offers
- You can hold two offers, one as firm acceptance, the other as insurance. Or you can firmly accept just one offer at the place you most want to go to. If you satisfy the conditions of your “firm acceptance” offer in August then this is the course and institution you will attend.
- An insurance acceptance should normally be for an offer at lower grades or tariff score than your firm acceptance. Remember – if you do not make the grades for your *firm* acceptance, but satisfy the conditions for your *insurance* acceptance, then you are *committed to going to the university you accepted as insurance*. It is therefore important to think very carefully about which offer you accept as insurance.
- If you decline all offers you will be eligible for Clearing in August, and possibly for UCAS Extra.
- If you have any doubts about what to do, take advice.
- Through the Track service UCAS will state the date by which you have to respond. This will be personal to you. The deadline for responding is likely to be in April or May, but UCAS will usually allow an extension into June, especially if you have some interviews to attend.

UCAS Extra

UCAS Extra was introduced in 2003, and enables applicants to make an additional choice of university course. It is aimed at two types of applicant:

- those who have not received any offers;
- those who are “non-committed” for any other reason.

These applicants no longer have to wait until Clearing to find a course to suit them.

The scheme will operate from the end of February to the end of June 2016. If an applicant is eligible to use Extra, a button will appear on their Track service. They can then apply for one course at a time using Track.

The aim of UCAS Extra is to reduce the numbers who use Clearing and Adjustment.

What happens when you get your results?

Let us imagine that you have applied through the UCAS system. You have just taken three A Levels. You are holding a firm conditional offer of BCC and an insurance conditional offer of CCD. You could be faced with a number of scenarios. (We expect the principles outlined below to apply also with the new tariff system.)

Scenario 1: You exceed everybody's expectations - You were aiming for BBB yet you get AAB. If this happens to you (and it is a rare occurrence) you are still committed to both your firm and insurance choices *for this year's entry*. Most people who fall into this category take a year out and apply again in the light of their unexpectedly good A-Level results. If you had made a deferred application, then you have a few weeks to withdraw after receiving your results and you can apply again the following year.

NEW! Please be aware of the new **adjustment period**

- A 5 day 'adjustment window' in August has been agreed
- For 5 days after A Level results eligible applicants will be able to look for an alternative course that has places available whilst still holding their original choice
- Applicant receives results and firm choice confirmed
- Results 'better' than required by conditional offer
- Applicant looks at available 'aspirational' courses
- Contact HEI to discuss new application
- Receive new offer of place or remain with original firm choice

Scenario 2: You get what you expected - You get ABB and you needed ABB. You do not have to do anything for a while. The university knew your A-Level results approximately four days before you did. They will soon write to you confirming your place and giving you your joining details.

Scenario 3: Near miss (the nightmare scenario) - You get ABB and you needed AAB. You have not met the conditions of your firm offer. You should telephone the university immediately. When you finally get through (be patient) they will say one of four things:

- "Don't worry, we are still going to take you."
- "You are rejected." You will have to go to your insurance university. If you have no insurance place then you will automatically be able to enter clearing through UCAS Track.
- "We haven't made our minds up yet and could take up to a week to decide, but no longer than that." If you have an insurance place, then you know you have this to fall back on. If you do not have an insurance place, this presents you with a dilemma: do you hang around and wait, thereby missing the best places in Clearing, or do you ask to be rejected so that you can go into Clearing? Circumstances can be different depending on subject so please seek advice.
- "We are going to offer you an alternative course". You do not have to accept this. It may be a very good course that is just right for you or it could be a disaster waiting to happen. Again, please seek advice. Do not be rushed into any snap decisions.

It is worth remembering that, if you are holding a CF (Conditional Firm) or CI (Conditional Insurance) offer, universities have to let you know their decisions by the Thursday following the publication of A-Level results.

Scenario 4: You miss by a long way - You get BCC but needed AAB! We can be fairly sure you will be rejected and will be able to enter clearing through Track. Unless of course you were applying for science or engineering courses – strange things can happen here.

Going through Clearing

Clearing is the system that matches students without a place to university courses with vacancies.

Who is it for?

- If you applied to UCAS but you do not hold any conditional offers, then you will automatically be allowed to enter Clearing.
- If you had conditional offers, but you were rejected because you failed to make the required grades, you will automatically be allowed to enter Clearing.
- If you did not apply to UCAS but you decide, after receiving your A-Level results, that, you would like to go to university, then you still have to go through UCAS APPLY to enter Clearing.

How does it work?

- Clearing starts the day A-Level results are known.
- It is your responsibility to find out about vacancies, contact the universities and ask them if they will accept you.
- You may get a number of positive responses, but the most important thing is that you only click on the one university that you really want to go to.

How do I find out about vacancies?

- The *Daily Telegraph* and other daily papers.
- The website www.ucas.com provides an excellent vacancy service.
- University websites.
- The adverts that most universities place in a range of newspapers.

What if I want to retake my A Levels?

- You need to discuss this with Mr Flack, Ms Mason or Mr Raine
- Traditionally, most retake students have gone to further education colleges. For various reasons, schools are not normally keen to have people retaking.

What if I need more advice?

It is most important that you do not make any rash decisions. Sixth Form staff will be on hand at school when you receive your results and on the following days.

Student finance

There are three main things that concern us with student finance:

- What the student finance arrangements are
- How you apply
- Student budgeting

The student needs to be aware of:

- Fees
- Loans (loans for fees and loans for maintenance)
- Extra loans (for students from lower income families)
- Repayments
- Bursaries

Detailed information is available at www.gov.uk/student-finance

More information at special assembly in Spring Term

Student finance for specific courses

Research on available bursaries should be done through the **course search** section of www.ucas.com

Dance and Drama Awards (DADA)

Students interested in dance and drama may need to know about separate funding arrangements at 19 (in 2016) private dance and drama colleges.

www.gov.uk/dance-drama-awards

National Health Service bursaries for health professional courses and social work

NHS bursaries are available for full-time or part-time pre-registration courses in England and Wales in the following subjects;

Chiropody, Dental Hygiene, Dental Therapy, Dietetics, Occupational Therapy, Orthoptics, Physiotherapy, Prosthetics & Orthotics (England only), Radiography, Speech and Language Therapy, Midwifery, Nursing. This scheme also administers the Social Work bursary.

To be eligible for an NHS bursary you must be accepted for an NHS-funded place.

Financial Help for Healthcare Students and Social Work students:

<http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students.aspx>

How to apply for financial support

The process - Apply online through www.gov.uk/student-finance

Residency status

A student is eligible for financial support (both loans and help with tuition fees) if he or she:

- is a UK citizen and has had “ordinary residence” in the UK for three years immediately before the start of the course;
- has full refugee status (but has not necessarily been in the UK for three years or more);
- has “exceptional leave” to remain or “settled status” (must have been in the UK for three years) with an original letter from the Home Office confirming this;
- is an EU national with “settled status” (to get this, you must have held a residency permit for four years).
- EU Nationals who do not have “settled status” or a residency permit for four years, will not be eligible for a loan. They may, however, get means-tested support for fees.

Student budgeting: where does the money go?

So how much is it going to cost you to be a student? You need to take into account:

- tuition fees;
- accommodation;
- other living expenses.

Fees and loans

For 2017-18 universities and colleges may be able to charge above £9000 a year in tuition fees. The amount will vary from course to course and university to university. You will be able to take out a student loan to cover the fees, and bursaries or exemptions may be available to lower-income students. The fees are paid directly to the University by Student Finance England, the organisation set up by the Government to administer the loans system.

Look at the student finance calculator:

www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/

Accommodation will be the single biggest drain on your finances! It could soak up half of your income, or more than three-quarters of your income if you have full board in university accommodation. However, to help with living costs there is another loan (Maintenance Loan).

University accommodation

Finding the right place to live is important, especially in your first year. It can affect your whole attitude to your college, your course, the town or city where you are staying, the people you meet and how well you do. So what are your options? Basically, you can live either in university accommodation or in privately rented accommodation (unless you choose a local university, in which case you can stay at home).

Most institutions give first-year students first claim on halls of residence. Costs vary between different types of university accommodation – the main choice is between self-catering and full or half board.

Expect to pay out half to three quarters of your income from the student finance system on accommodation

Some points to think about when considering university accommodation

- Living in university rooms can work out cheaper because: you have no gas or electricity bills; you are only paying rent during term-time; you don't risk losing your deposit to an unscrupulous landlord.
- Are the rooms shared?
- What facilities are provided?
- What is the distance from college? What is transport like?

Some points to think about when renting privately

- When going private, the best way to avoid problems is to take care what you are doing in the first place. Look early, and get any help your university or students' union can give you.
- Watch out for massive deposits which sap your start-of-term cash.
- Watch out for broken or dangerous services (eg. boilers, gas fires).
- Using a reputable renting agency may avoid some of these problems but the only real cure for a dodgy landlord is to move.

Other living expenses (Based on Nat West Student Living Survey)

Food

Socializing and entertainment

Books

Course equipment

Field trips

Travel

Internet

Mobile phones

Clothing

Other issues about cash and accommodation

- Students in the south-east – but studying outside London – can find that money is tight because they may pay London-equivalent rents but do not get the larger Student Loan offered to London students.
- Students report that, on the whole, accommodation off campus is easy to find. However, there may be high competition for good accommodation near to the university (where there are no travel costs).

Specialist and Selective Courses

Oxbridge

What makes Oxford and Cambridge Universities different?

- The quality of the educational experience. You will be taught by the leaders in their fields and, in return, you will have to push yourself to achieve the very high levels of work that they expect. Remember, though, that there is academic excellence at other universities as well.
- More teaching will be done individually. Remember too, however, that you will be expected to be a self-starter and to work independently.
- Whatever degree you do, your career prospects will be very good. You will gain a certain level of respect from employers simply because of the university you went to (though this effect diminishes as your career goes on).
- Colleges are normally friendly places, in pleasant surroundings. Accommodation provision is often very good.
- Oxbridge colleges still have a better level of funding than other universities.

The college system

- Oxford University has twenty-nine colleges. Cambridge University has twenty-five colleges. Don't be put off by some idiosyncratic pronunciations. Magdalene College, for example, is pronounced *maud-lin*.
- **Lectures** are taught by the university. English lectures, for example, will be taught at the university's English faculty.
- **Tutorials** (at Oxford) and **supervisions** (at Cambridge) involve being taught individually or in small groups at your college.
- You live, eat and socialise at your college.
- Cambridge colleges, on the whole, will find you accommodation for three years. Oxford colleges vary. Some will ask you to go into the private rented sector in the second year.
- It is inadvisable for two people from the same school to apply for the same subject at the same college.

Points to consider when choosing a college at Oxbridge

- Does the college offer accommodation for the duration of the course?
- Does the college have a fellow or director of studies in your subject?
- Research the college that interests you most, but don't become too attached – you may be pooled and offered a place at another college.
- *You cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge.*

What are Oxford and Cambridge looking for?

- Generally, Oxbridge colleges select students who are very interested and enthusiastic about the subject they are applying for, and who have the evidence to prove it.
- For most subjects you will need A*AA at A Level (there are some exceptions at Oxford). Cambridge will ask for A*AA/A*A*A! Remember that most successful candidates are bright and very, very, very hard working – they are not usually geniuses!

Because Oxbridge colleges offer places *before* A-Level results come out, they consider the following when selecting candidates:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| - GCSE results (7.5 GCSE average points score or above, unless you have mitigating circumstances or teacher recommendation) | - definitely |
| - AS-Level results (or UMS scores) (very important at Cambridge) | - definitely |
| - Predicted A-Level grades | - definitely |
| - Your school reference | - definitely |
| - School work that they may ask you to send in | - definitely |
| - Your performance at interview | - definitely |
| - Work that they may ask you to do when you go for interview | - possibly |
| - STEP papers (see chapter 6 on additional tests) | - mostly Maths at Cambridge |
| - Additional tests (see chapter 6) | - mostly at Oxford |
| - Your school's profile and contextual data | - definitely |

What to do if you want to apply

- You must apply by 15 October 2016 (school's deadline is earlier – **19 September 2016**).
- You will need to start preparing yourself for the application process, particularly the interviews. General preparation might include discussion of philosophical issues and improving your critical thinking skills. Specific preparation would include: subject-based background reading; more practice of your subject; wide general reading.
- If you are unsure about an Oxbridge application for financial reasons, note that both universities and the colleges have access to extra funds, which they can pass on to you (for example, from the Isaac Newton Trust).
- If you have a chance you will be supported. JFS has a renowned system of support for Oxbridge applicants. If you are interested, hopefully you attended Mr Flacks's introductory talk and will attend the preparation programme in February/March 2016.
- In July we will begin to hold mock interviews with each applicant where a subject specialist will probe your response to recent reading or discuss Mathematical/scientific issues with you. We also use this session to begin gathering information for your reference.
- Remember that, if the School is to support you in your application, you have to commit to the specific preparation programmes it has established.
- For further information visit www.ox.ac.uk and www.cam.ac.uk

Specialist and Selective Courses

Additional tests

With more and more applicants gaining the highest A-Level grades, universities are finding it hard to sort the “very good” from the “good”. The Admissions tutor will take into account UCAS personal statements, but how can they be sure that these are solely the work of the students (who may have been helped by their parents or schools)? School references, too, are so overwhelmingly positive that most applicants seem wonderful.

Some universities, therefore, are looking for some form of additional test to help them decide who will be able to cope with the rigours of their degrees. JFS will help you prepare for these tests. **The use of tests is constantly changing – always look at up-to-date online prospectus information.**

Also look at:

www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/entry-requirements/admissions-tests

BMAT test (bio-medical admissions test)

This is for applicants to medicine at Brighton and Sussex, Cambridge, Imperial, Leeds, Oxford (and Biomedical) and UCL and applicants for veterinary science at Cambridge and the Royal Veterinary College.

You can look at examples of the tests on www.bmat.org.uk

UKCAT

For entry to some Medicine and Dentistry Schools – separate to BMAT.

There is no science paper, the tests are not curriculum based, examples will appear on website.

Dentistry

Cardiff, Dundee, Glasgow, Kings College London, Manchester, Newcastle, Queen Mary and Sheffield.

Medicine

Aberdeen, Cardiff, Dundee, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Hull and York, Keele, Kings College London, Leicester, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Plymouth, QUB, Queen Mary, Uni of East Anglia, St Andrews, St George’s, Sheffield and Southampton.

www.ukcat.ac.uk

STEP

This is used for applicants for maths at Cambridge and Warwick Universities. Bristol, Oxford, Imperial and Bath Universities all encourage applicants to take the papers.

www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk

Cambridge University www.cam.ac.uk

Thinking skills assessment

This is used by many Cambridge colleges, for applicants to computing, natural sciences, engineering and economics.

<http://www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk>

Cambridge University: modern languages assessment test

Cambridge University: additional tests set by colleges

Cambridge Law Test

Law admissions test - LNAT

Was used at:

Birmingham, Bristol, Durham, Glasgow, King’s College London, Nottingham, Oxford and UCL.

For admissions in 2015.

Visit www.lnat.ac.uk

for more information. Please note Cambridge has introduced its own Law test.

Oxford University:

Now has a very wide range of tests. There are now so many tests we recommend that you go to the Tests section of the undergraduate Admissions pages (see how to apply) in the Oxford University website www.ox.ac.uk

Specialist and Selective Courses

Art and Drama courses

News - Simplified arrangements for Art and Design Applicants for degree courses

- The majority of courses have a deadline of 15 January, some offer a deadline of 24 March
- Students will be able to choose five courses
- No preference order
- Simultaneous consideration
- Notification of interview dates through TRACK

Therefore, other than some courses having a later deadline of 24 March all Art and Design applicants are now treated equally

Why do an Art Foundation course?

Many students at JFS study Art and Design A Level think about doing an Art Foundation course. But before you commit yourself to this route you need to think about your reasons for doing it. The majority of Art and Design related degree courses require Art Foundation for entry.

Many Sixth Form students will be doing Art A Level, which is the study of painting, drawing and sculpture. Yet most students in this field at university will study Design subjects, such as graphic, fashion, product or interior design. An Art Foundation course acts as a bridge between A Levels and design degrees.

The normal attributes of an Art Foundation course

- It is one year long, full-time.
- Fees are not normally charged if you take the course while you are still eighteen years old.
- Most courses will make you work hard on your drawing skills.
- In the first term you try out all the major areas of Art and Design such as – fine art, sculpture, fashion, textiles, ceramics, product design, interior design and other areas, depending on the course.
- In the second term you will try to decide the area of Art and Design that you would like to specialise in. You will begin to concentrate on this area so that you have a specialist portfolio for the degree or Foundation Degree/HND course you want to apply for.
- It is very common for students to start an Art Foundation course believing they want to do a certain sort of design, such as fashion, and then, once they have tried everything out, to decide to do something different, such as illustration.
- It is a very intense year and it is not an easy option. You should know by the end of it whether Art and Design is for you. If you feel that you do not want to do a degree in Art and Design then you can apply for other courses on the strength of the A Levels that you have.
- Most Art and Design degrees and HND courses make the successful completion of an Art Foundation course an entrance requirement.
- You do not apply for Art Foundation courses through UCAS. You either apply through the University of the Arts Admissions Scheme or direct to the colleges. When you visit the colleges you will be given details on how to apply.

Structure of the Art Foundation course

The three stages of the one year fulltime course comprise of:

1 Exploratory stage

This stage consists of an accelerated programme of diagnostic visual study.

Units

- Unit 1 Information and Research
- Unit 2 Recording and Responding
- Unit 3 Media Experimentation

Content

Drawing Studies, Two-dimensional Studies, Three-dimensional Studies, Historical and Theoretical Studies, Information Technology Studies and Photography Studies.

2 Pathway stage

This stage consists of a more testing and interpretative programme of integrated diagnostic studies leading towards the identification of, and involvement in, selected areas of specialist work.

Units

- Unit 4 Information and interpretation
- Unit 5 Combined experimental studies
- Unit 6 Media development
- Unit 7 Preparation and progression

Content

- A project sequence of open-ended, interpretative, enquiry-based investigations becoming progressively more area specific.
- Historical and Theoretical Studies
- Gathering of Information on Subject Areas and HE Provision
- Production and Preparation of an HE Application Portfolio

3 Confirmatory stage

This stage consists of a period of sustained study leading to the presentation of a substantial body of work in a broad area of specialisation.

Units

- Unit 8 Integrating Theory and Practice
- Unit 9 Personal Confirmatory Study

Content

- Self-initiated projects developed, agreed and formalised in tutorial as a major project.
- Historical and Theoretical Studies
- Gathering of Information on Subject Areas

Art Foundation course visits

Contact : University of the Arts – you often need to make an online booking to attend an open day visit: www.arts.ac.uk

Also visit Kingston University, Ravensbourne College, Oaklands-St Albans

A common question that many students ask when applying for Art Foundation courses is: “Should I do UCAS APPLY as well?”

For most people – those who definitely know that they want to do an Art or Design degree – the answer will be “no”. This is because it makes things too complicated when you want to apply for degree courses later on.

If, however, you know that you definitely want to do a degree which is *different* from Art and Design, then you can apply through UCAS for deferred entry and do the Foundation course as a gap year.

Drama training

Students wishing to pursue a stage career should note that funding can be an issue.

- Most courses accredited by the National Council for Dramatic Training or NCDT (these are the ones that lead you into professional acting, dance or stage management) are state funded through the HEFCE and you will be treated the same as any other higher-education student. Be aware, though, that colleges may decide to charge the higher fees asked for by other universities.
- Some courses, however, are not state funded, so you need to check with each individual college.
- If your college is not funded by HEFCE arrangements, you may be entitled to a Dance and Drama Award, or DADA.
- Colleges can also award their own scholarships – though you cannot rely on getting one of these.
- Many drama schools are joining up with larger universities and will therefore come under HEFCE arrangements. It is important that you contact the schools you are interested in to see what their funding situation is.
- Only NCDT-accredited courses can guarantee you membership of Equity (the acting trade union), which most people need to get acting work.

Look for essential information from :
Conference of Drama Schools
Consult Mrs Sloane

Go to: www.dramauk.co.uk
www.cdet.org.uk

Application and Music Conservatoire Courses

- Application is through CUKAS, the Conservatoires UK Admissions Service. It runs in a similar way to UCAS.
- There are seven conservatoires and you can apply for up to five.
- **Deadline: 1 October 2016.**
- Visit: www.cukas.ac.uk
- Consult Mr Appleman or Mrs Bellinger.