

SIXTH FORM REFERENCES - CONTENTS

Introduction

As your full time education at college draws to a close, you will need to prepare for a future which will include new challenges in new locations. This section provides you with information on some of the wide range of expectations and choices that will be available and gives guidance on some of the opportunities on offer. Make sure that you share your thoughts with others; you will be surprised how knowledgeable tutors, parents and adult relatives are.

Higher Education

A large majority of sixth formers continue their study in Higher Education (HE). The following information is here to help you prepare for this future pathway.

- Useful university preparation website
- application to Higher Education
- applying to UCAS & making the grade
- the personal statement
- writing your personal statement
- taking a GAP year and doing voluntary work

Your development – skills, knowledge and understanding

Whatever your choices, the following pages provide you with a valuable range of hints, advice and guidance to support your personal development and prepare you for your next phase of life:

- general study advice & guidance
- preparing for exams – revision & time management
- preparing for exams – essay writing

ENJOY AND MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR SIXTH FORM TIME

USEFUL UNIVERSITY PREPARATION WEBSITES

www.ucas.com

www.ucas.com/ucas card

www.aimhigher.ac.uk - information on loans/universities/courses/finance/fees

www.bestcourse4me.com Choosing the right course at the right university

www.ukcoursefinder.co.uk - helps you find your ideal university degree course

www.tqi.ac.uk - looks at quality of higher education in UK universities and colleges

www.opendays.com

www.hotcourses.com - limited but helps identify courses relevant to key areas of interest

www.icould.com Films and features from real people in real jobs sharing their stories

www.studentfinance.direct.gov.uk

www.prospects.ac.uk - graduate careers website and general info on different degrees

www.gapyear.com - award winning site

www.timesonline.co.uk - ranks universities and courses

www.educationguardian.co.uk - ranks universities and courses

www.purepotential.org - covers all areas of HE including admissions tests

www.yougo4further.co.uk - jobs/networking/money/lifestyle/student shop

www.ONE4UNI.com - laptops/accessories/software at discount prices

www.hero.ac.uk - facts on Higher Education

www.uni360.com – provides 360 degree virtual tours of universities and other HE institutions around the UK plus helpful advice on how to choose where to go and what to study.

www.ProspectusUK.com – order your own prospectus from all universities

www.russellgroup.ac.uk – International Excellence Group - Help with post-16 subject choices

www.uni-uk.co.uk - helps with course searches

www.unistats.co.uk - information from students about courses, compares and contrasts

www.thegooduniversityguide.co.uk - as it states

www.studentsurvivor.org.uk from the charity UNIAID is a game in which users must keep a virtual student alive until graduation by keeping their affairs in balance.

www.skill.org.uk - for students with disabilities

www.coursediscover.co.uk - a commercial website i.e. you have to pay!

www.independent.co.uk - A – Z of degrees, useful careers and H.E guidance information

www.Uni4me.com - student views

www.heloa.ac.uk - website of local colleges and liaison officers

www.parentadviser.co.uk – this is a particularly good place to start and offers practical advice on finance and how to choose the right university.

APPLICATION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

How do I apply to university?

You need to apply through UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) using the online application system at: www.ucas.com/apply.

Timeline of events and your action plan

You will need to start thinking about the application up to 18 months before your intended university start date. See the timeline diagram below and use it as your 'action plan'.

YEAR 12

MONTH	IMPORTANT EVENTS/DEADLINES	
April	Begin UCAS process at HE Events and in college/college.	<input type="checkbox"/>
May & June	Research courses/universities and UCAS system.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Obtain information on courses/universities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Receive careers guidance from professionals.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Visit universities. Attend open day events.	<input type="checkbox"/>
July & August	Begin to restrict number of courses/universities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Produce a draft UCAS application & personal statement.	<input type="checkbox"/>
September	Check draft UCAS application in early September.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Start formal UCAS application.	<input type="checkbox"/>
October	15 th October: deadline for completed applications to be received by UCAS for medicine, dentistry, veterinary and Oxbridge applications. GCC recommend that competitive courses aim to hit this deadline also e.g. English / History / Physiotherapy / Law etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 13

October	Half-term: Glossopdale deadline for completion of all UCAS applications	<input type="checkbox"/>
January	15 th January: deadline for all UK university applications (except some Art & Design courses). Some students will now begin to receive decisions. This is also the time to apply for your student finance on the website: www.studentfinance.direct.gov.uk	<input type="checkbox"/>
February	Late February: 'UCAS Extra' can be used if all choices are used up and you have been unsuccessful. You can add another course/university choice up until clearing begins.	<input type="checkbox"/>
March	Mid March: deadline for some Art & Designs courses	<input type="checkbox"/>
May	Early May: deadline for your response to offers.	<input type="checkbox"/>
August	Mid August: 'Results Day'. Clearing System starts shortly after results day.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
September	University start date.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other points to note

We have issued our own deadlines of October half-term in order to ensure that your UCAS application is checked thoroughly and that high quality references are written. These deadlines will give you the best possible opportunities – please respect them.

EFFECTIVE PLANNING IS THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

APPLYING

Applying to UCAS & making the grade

How to apply

- applications for the majority of Higher Education courses are made through UCAS. The UCAS directory lists all participating institutions. Log onto www.ucas.com
- speak to your tutors/career advisors about the correct method of application. They will provide you with the information you need to make your online application
- you are allowed to choose up to 5 courses from the full range of institutions
- you will need to apply between early September and mid-January

- UCAS circulates your application form to all of your chosen institutions
- university/Admissions tutors assess each application
- UCAS will issue you with a personal ID number; this will enable you to log onto UCAS track to check the progress of your application
- decisions and offers are made via UCAS track

Types of offer

Conditional - to be accepted, you need to achieve a certain points score or grades.

Unconditional - your place is not determined by points/grades

Alternative Course Offer - a different course is offered from the one applied for

Unsuccessful - the university are not able to offer you a place

Choices

After you receive offers you will be asked to make 2 choices:

Firm Choice - your first choice (ensure you have a realistic chance of meeting the entry requirements)

Insurance Choice - your second choice (usually has lower entry requirements than the Firm)

UCAS Extra will give you a further opportunity to make additional choices if you have been unsuccessful in your initial choice(s).

Points to note

- applications to Oxford or Cambridge must be submitted to UCAS by 15th October
- you cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge in the same year
- you can only choose 4 courses if applying for medicine, dentistry or veterinary plus one other of any choice
- for some specialist dance and drama courses, you apply directly to the institution

Making the grade

- if you meet the grades of your Firm choice, you will have a place on the course
- your Insurance choice may provide an alternative if you don't meet your Firm choice
- if you don't get the grades you may be able to find a course through 'Clearing'. Log onto the UCAS clearing website to find details of all the universities clearing opportunities, or contact the UCAS helpline on: 0871 468 0468
- if you achieve grades that are higher than you expect you are entitled to go through 'Adjustment' to see if there is another course you would prefer to study

UCAS Application hints and tips

- check your spelling and grammar carefully
- be aware of key dates and plan well in advance to meet deadlines
- read all the instructions carefully and follow them exactly
- don't be afraid to speak to UCAS, or the universities, with any questions
- be confident you can make the grade

REMEMBER

- make sure all the details are correct; errors can delay your application
- aim to get your applications in as close to the start of the UCAS application cycle (beginning of September) as possible and at the latest October half-term
- do not miss the deadline for returning your statement of decisions to UCAS or they will assume you have withdrawn your application
- do not go on holiday on, or directly after, results day

PERSONAL STATEMENT

What is the Personal Statement?

The Personal Statement is a very important part of your UCAS application. In just 47 lines (4000 characters), you have to convince university admissions tutors that you are totally committed to your chosen subject. It is your opportunity to sell yourself and secure an offer of a place. It is crucial that your statement reflects your personality, as well as showing your motivation and commitment. Indicate what it is that makes you an interesting person and how you may gain even more experience from attending that university. Universities are now interviewing fewer students and rely heavily on the personal statement when assessing academically equivalent applications.

What do I write?

There are no right or wrong formats. Start by using the suggestions below:

1. Course

- demonstrate that you have researched your course.
- why are you interested?
- what sparked your interest?
- what specific topics do you enjoy?
- identify common factors if applying for more than one course type
- for combined courses, make sure you say why you're interested in both areas

2. Career

- if you have an idea of your career path, explain how the course fits in with this and how it suits your interests and ability

3. Experience

- consider both work and life experiences, both related and unrelated to your course
- be specific about what you have learned

- refer to transferable skills gained, e.g. planning, communication, time management & problem-solving

4. Achievements

- include any personal achievements and state what they demonstrate, e.g. participation in a fund raising event may have involved teamwork,
- research and organisational skills, commitment and perseverance. Describe any positions of responsibility you've held, e.g. student mentor or team leader

5. Extra – Curricular

- you should include activities that support your choice of course. Describe any visits you have made, e.g. visits to art galleries for art courses or hospitals for nursing
- even if your interests aren't directly relevant, it is important to give an impression of your personality so mention any hobbies or gap year plans

Top tips for your Personal Statement

- think about writing your statement weeks in advance (before you break up for the summer holiday in July) – you'll write several drafts
- as a rough guide, use half the space to write about your chosen course. Use the remainder to write about your chosen career path, work experience, achievements and extra-curricular activities
- write in a positive style that you feel comfortable with, using simple words and clear sentence structures. Don't try to be funny as others may not share your sense of humour. Be analytical about yourself and the subject, rather than descriptive. Never start your personal statement, 'I have always been interested in...'
- be honest! You may be asked questions about your personal statement at an interview
- don't rely on a spell-checker. Proof read as many times as possible. It can be helpful to leave a few days between drafts as it's often easier to identify mistakes in spelling and grammar after distancing yourself. Ask your tutors, parents and friends to make final checks

**REMEMBER: UNIVERSITIES ROUTINELY CHECK FOR
PLAGIARISM, ENSURING STATEMENTS ARE NOT COPIED FROM
THE INTERNET**

WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Writing a statement about yourself is an important skill. There is no such thing as the perfect or model personal statement; this is unique to each individual and it is the applicant's opportunity to demonstrate their personal motivation and commitment. As a guide, the first part of the statement should be about your reasons for choosing the course and this should

be followed by an outline of your knowledge and experience of the subject applied for. Finally, you need to show how the skills that you have developed and demonstrated make you a well-rounded individual.

REMEMBER: TRY TO MAKE YOUR STATEMENT STAND OUT FROM THOSE OF SIMILAR STUDENTS.

Task 1 - Identify your strengths

Do not be modest or take them for granted. State the skills that you have developed that are transferable requirements of your chosen course.

List skills developed

Communication

Listening

Speaking

Working independently

Computer literacy

Team work

Managing others

Caring for others

Using your initiative

List evidence

Part time job

Member of sports team

Peer mentoring younger students

Dealing with customers

Charity work

Work Experience

Voluntary work

Special awards and achievements

Participation in events and activities

Add other skills you have acquired and provide the evidence

Use these lists to complete a self-assessment using the headings below. You should then identify and include areas in which you require improvement.

- My personal strengths/qualities
- Attendance and punctuality
- Involvement in extra-curricular/ enrichment/additional activities
- In college / college and out of college/college
- Work experience / part time job / hobbies and interests

Task 2 – Write your Personal Statement.

This must be clear and easy to read. Use the following tips and advice to help you:

Avoid writing:

- 'I enjoy reading...'
- 'I have a variety of skills...'
- 'I am the captain of the football team...'

Instead try to write varied sentences with a range of starting points. For example:

- 'The opportunity to work with...'
- 'Apart from my involvement in ...'
- 'In addition to ...'

Think of different starting points for the following and create your own sentences

- 'I have taken part in...'
- 'I am the captain of the football team...'
- 'I enjoy socialising...'
- 'I enjoy reading...'
- 'I have worked at...'
- 'I ran the Sixth Form college council...'
- 'I do voluntary work at the local hospice...'
- 'I have a number of skills...'

E.g. 'Apart from my involvement in the college's peer mentoring programme, I am also involved in the local community's Help the Aged project...'

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT IS ACCURATE AND UP TO DATE

TAKING A GAP YEAR & DOING VOLUNTARY WORK

Some students decide to take a Gap Year before they begin university or embark on their chosen career path. This can be a productive way to spend a year and is viewed as a positive experience by universities and employers. However, you must use the year constructively and be able to demonstrate how the skills and experiences gained will support your future education and training.

Your questions about Gap Years answered

Why take a Gap Year?

- travel and experience other cultures
- gain life experiences
- research academic or personal interests
- build confidence
- realise your own potential
- develop new skills
- demonstrate independence

- make a difference
- be adventurous
- a requirement for some courses and employment
- enhances your UCAS application or CV

What can I do?

- travel independently or as part of a group
- teach or work abroad
- volunteer in this country or abroad
- gain unpaid work experience
- alternative form of education, e.g. learn a language
- employment to save for university
- train at an academy, e.g. sports and leisure
- simply have fun

How do I do it?

- know what you want to accomplish at the end of the year
- talk to someone who has been there and done it
- plan your finances – how are you going to raise the funds?
- don't forget your personal safety – research where you plan to go thoroughly
- involve your parents/carers in your decisions
- if relevant to your chosen course, inform your university
- Gap Year organisations are good but you do not have to use them. Shop around and find which is the best deal for you

Useful websites

Volunteering

- www.projecttrust.org.uk
- www.do-it.org.uk
- www.latitude.org.uk
- www.volunteering.org.uk

Work Experience

- www.work-experience.org
- www.prospects.ac.uk

Travel

- www.findagapyear.co.uk
- www.gapyear.com

- www.bunac.org
 - www.realgap.co.uk
- A Year in Industry (YINI)
- www.etrust.org.uk