

NORTHAMPTON
HIGH SCHOOL

GDST
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST



Student and parent guide to UCAS



Contents

- 3 Seven steps to success
 - 4 Year 12 calendar for UCAS applications
 - 5 Year 13 calendar for UCAS applications
 - 6 Making a competitive application
 - 7 Support offered by our Sixth Form team
 - 8-9 Maximising your chances
 - 10 Writing your Personal Statement
 - 11 Universities who may make unconditional/reduced EPQ offers
 - 12 Making changes to your application
 - 13 Accepting your offers
 - 14 The UCAS points tariff
 - 15 Applying to courses not on UCAS
 - 16 Useful websites
-

Seven steps to success

The Sixth Form staff team will help you with all the decisions you have to make and with all stages of the UCAS application process, but these are the things you will need to do to give yourself your best chance of getting on to a course that excites you, at a university where you would be happy spending 3 to 5 years of your life.

Work Consistently: Always attending lessons, doing homework and revising for tests/mock exams will help you get the best grades you are capable of. The higher the grades you are likely to achieve the more choices you will have when applying for degree courses.

Research Your Options: Use the careers literature and prospectuses in school and online; check notice boards and your emails for information; attend virtual careers and university events and open days; use the Higher Education websites listed in this guide and check the information and guidance on the Higher Education/UCAS pages on FireFly.

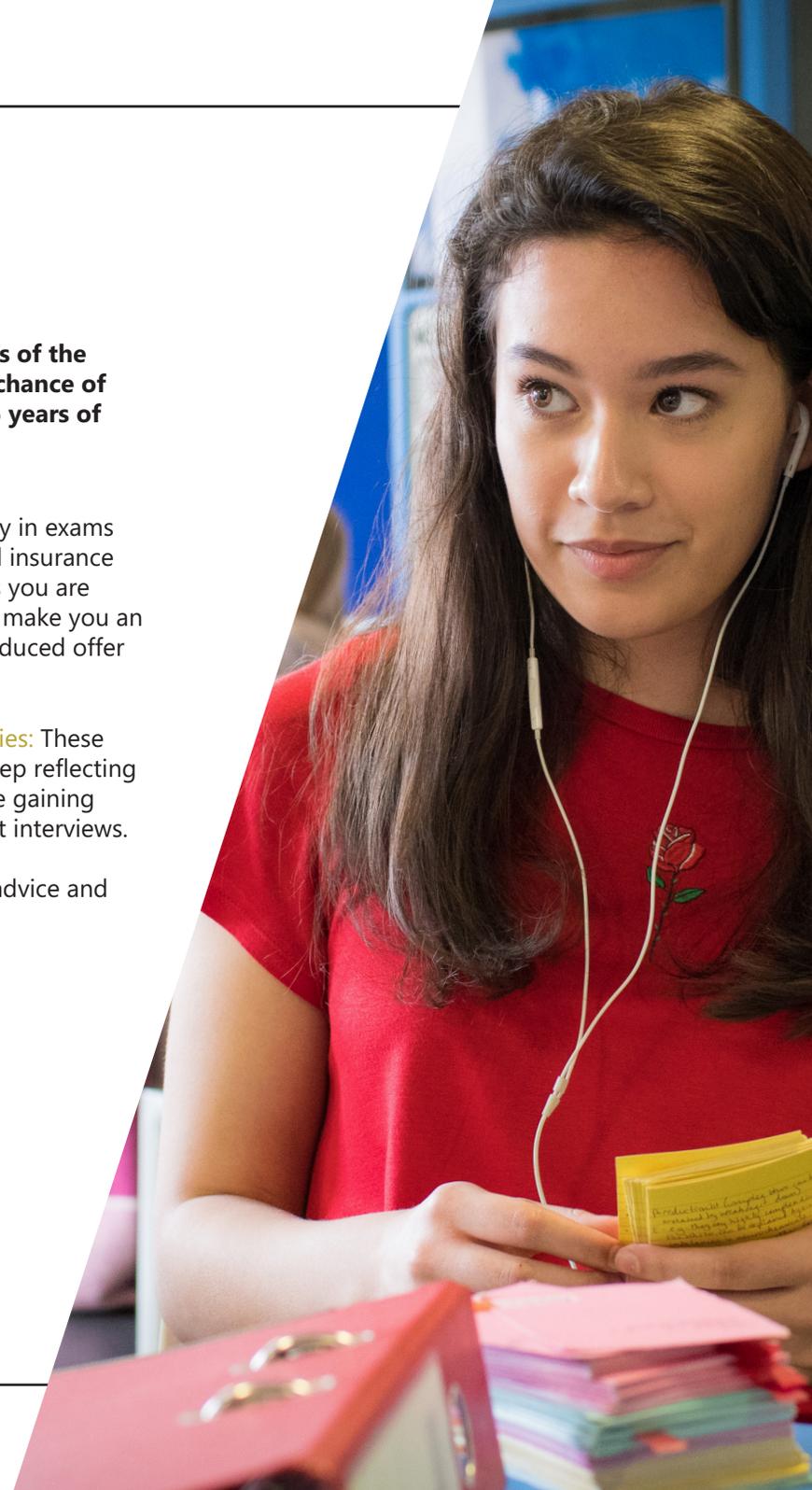
Take Advice: Make full use of your form tutor, Mrs Cantwell, Mr Viesel, subject staff and former students (via Rungway) to discuss your ideas.

Visit Universities: Open days are from May to November. Check dates on university websites or on www.opendays.com. Weekend dates tend to fill up at popular universities so book these well in advance so you don't miss too much school. If you can't visit before applying, scrutinise the university's website (including virtual tours and video information).

Spread The Risk: Anyone can have a bad day in exams so visit universities that would make a good insurance choice if you don't quite achieve the grades you are aiming for. Consider universities that might make you an unconditional offer or would make you a reduced offer if you get a high grade for your EPQ.

Maintain Your Extra/Super Curricular Activities: These will make you stand out from the crowd. Keep reflecting on what skills and personal qualities you are gaining and use these in your personal statement/at interviews.

Be Flexible: If things don't go to plan, take advice and be prepared to consider alternative routes.



Year 12 calendar for UCAS applications

January

- Advice about UCAS applications begins.
- Apply for work experience placements as appropriate.
- Enrichment preparation course for UCAT/BMAT continues.
- Book your place at the GDST Oxbridge conference.

February

- Make sure you are participating in a range of activities and wider reading to support your HE/apprenticeship applications.
- Attend the Higher Education Evening.

March

- Bookings start for university open days – check university websites and book into taster courses and open days. Places are allocated on a first come first served basis so be quick to book the dates you prefer.

April

- Arrange a summer work placement/volunteering scheme/ National Citizen Service place if you can and explore relevant GHL courses including MOOCS on Futurelearn.

May

- Maintain high standards in all assignments and prepare for the Internal exams which will be in September this year – results from these will help you to finalise your HE choices.

May continued

- Are you achieving the grades you are capable of? If not, we will support you with a plan of action.
- Ensure that your e-portfolio is updated.
- Attend virtual workshop on writing your UCAS personal statement delivered by Jane Marshall from Optimising Futures.
- Register on UCAS Apply and start to fill in your UCAS form.

June

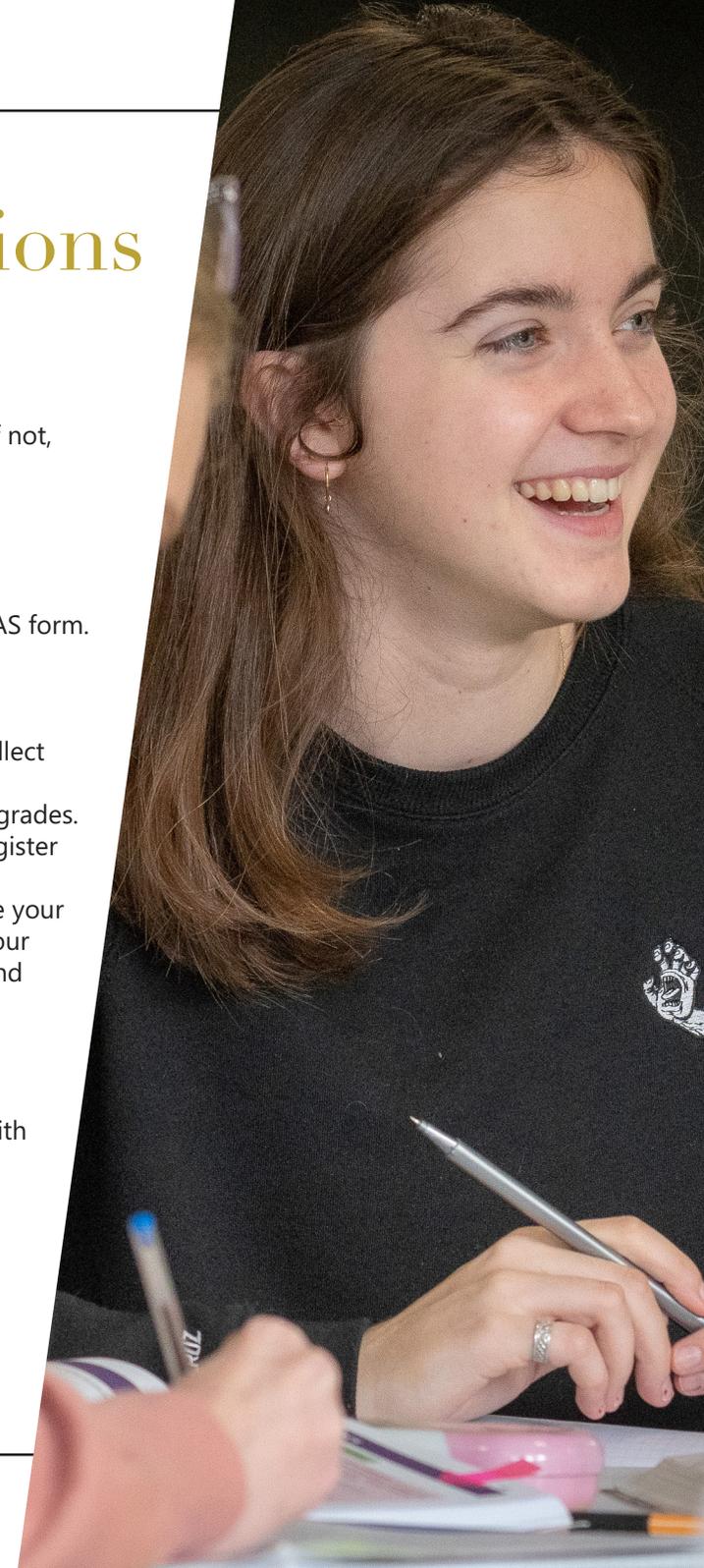
- Continue virtual visits to university open days to collect relevant information.
- Ask your subject teachers to tell you your likely AL grades. Students applying for Medicine/Dentistry need to register for the UCAT.
- Start writing your personal statement and complete your reference information sheet. Arrange to meet with your tutor/Oxbridge mentor to discuss your application and continue your preparation.

July

- Discuss the first draft of your personal statement with your tutor/Oxbridge mentor so you can perfect it in the holidays.

August

- Medics should aim to take their UCAT this month.



Year 13 calendar for UCAS applications

September

- Register for admissions tests (Oxbridge, BMAT, LNAT)
Students preparing for admissions tests will work with their allocated mentor.
- Students applying for early entry courses should have a good personal statement drafted by the end of first week of term to show to their mentor/Mr Viesel.
- Attend our Interview Preparation Workshops to practice your interview skills.
- The School deadline for completion of UCAS forms for Early Applicants is 30th September.

October

- 15th October is the deadline for Oxbridge, Vet Sci, Medicine and Dentistry applications to be sent to UCAS.
- Cambridge applicants complete SAQ.
- 28th October BMAT/ Oxbridge Admissions Tests are taken in school.
- It is in your interests to complete your UCAS application by the end of October half term unless you have exceptional circumstances.

November

- Attend college open days for Art Foundation courses.
- Offers for places at universities not requiring interviews begin to flood in.

December

- Oxbridge interviews.
- Invites to interviews for Medicine, Dentistry and Vet Science start now.

January

- Any additions to your UCAS Choices must be made by January 15th.
- Complete applications to Art Foundation courses. Check college websites for details. NB Student loan arrangements do not apply to these courses.

February

- UCAS Extra opens for students who have used all 5 choices and had no offers or who have changed their minds about the course they want to apply to.

March

- Student Finance online applications open.
- Keep working hard to achieve the grades you need.
- All offers will have been made by universities except where interviews are ongoing.

April

- Deadline for Student Finance applications if you want to ensure money is in place at the start of your course.

May

- Deadline for final decisions about Firm and Insurance course choices. Seek advice as necessary.
- Study leave begins but attend all revision classes to maximise your chance of exam success.

June

- External examinations.

July

- Clearing places can be viewed on the UCAS website.

August

- You will receive your A Level results on Thursday 12th August 2021.
- Clearing and Adjustment procedures begin. Staff are available in school on Results Day and subsequent days to offer help as needed.

Sept/Oct

- Go to university. Hooray, you made it!

Making a competitive application



Suggested Tasks

- Review your notes using your textbook
- Do some wider reading

believe in our girls.
and they believe in
themselves.

Support offered by our Sixth Form team

An ongoing Tutorial and Careers Programme throughout Sixth Form

Individual guidance interviews with tutors/Mrs Cantwell/ Mr Viesel/Miss Kneen

- To establish your course and career intentions.
- To advise you on course choice and the application process.
- To discuss your examination results and predicted grades.

Interview Skills

- A programme of Interview Preparation Workshops are led by Ms Heimfeld and Mrs Carr. These are for all students who expect to be interviewed for their chosen degree course. We will help you to identify useful interview strategies and give you experience of being interviewed by subject specialists from outside the school. Their feedback is enormously helpful, often very encouraging and, of course, objective.
- Further practice is available from subject teachers and other colleagues. You might discover that interviews can be fun!
- Information on previous students' experience of university interviews (including types of questions and the use of written material and tests) has been collated and is available from subject mentors.

Assistance with completing applications and proofing Personal Statements

- The Higher Education Evening will include a Personal Statement presentation from a leading university and the PSHEE programme will include UCAS preparation and guidance including a Personal Statement Workshop.
- Form tutors, subject teachers, Oxbridge mentors, Mr Viesel and Mrs Cantwell are all available to help students write a competitive personal statement.
- Final checks on all applications are made by Mrs Cantwell, Mr Rickman and Mrs Petryszak.

Additional Support for Early Entry Courses

- March - Oxbridge Applications seminar for students and parents.
- June/July school minibus trip to the open days at Oxford and Cambridge. Students need to book visits to the colleges they are most interested in.
- Oxbridge mentoring - the most appropriate teacher will support each student with admissions test and interview preparation.
- Students applying for Medicine or Dentistry who need to take the UCAT and/or BMAT are members of VetMed and offered support sessions from September onwards with Mrs Carr.
- Miss Kneen will offer support to students taking the LNAT.



Maximising your chances

Your successful entry to any course depends on these nine factors.

GCSE and EPQ results

These are an indicator of what you are capable of achieving. Good grades show your ability to sustain effort and to achieve at a higher level. Competitive courses may use these as a first sift for applicants.

Predicted A Level grades

These are very important as they show what your teachers think of your ability. The best ways to achieve good predictions are:

- Excellent school attendance and playing a full and active part in lessons.
- Achieving great results in your homework, class tests and in mock exams.
- Extending your understanding of the subject, for example through extra reading and involvement in relevant projects.

Working consistently hard will allow you to achieve your full potential and shows that you have an appetite for higher level study.

Your School Reference

This will be based on reports from your subject teachers and our knowledge of your wider involvement in clubs, societies and activities both in and out of school. Your tutor or subject mentor, for early entry courses, who knows you well will collate all the information about you into a positive reference. This can only be 4000 characters in length (the same as your Personal Statement). Make certain we have information about your achievements/relevant experiences, future plans and, where appropriate, circumstances that may have prevented you from achieving your full potential. You can do this by ensuring that your e-portfolio is up to date and all the necessary information is shared with your tutor/mentor.

Your Completed UCAS Application

Higher Education is a popular option so you need to take a great deal of care over completing your online application. This way you will present yourself as a well-organised and well-motivated student. During our UCAS preparation sessions in May we will help you register on Apply and start completing all the factual information sections, leaving you time to concentrate on the personal statement.

Make certain that you give staff enough time to check your application thoroughly before key deadlines.

The school reference and your personal statement need to include examples of your extracurricular activities (non-academic pursuits that develop your skills and personal qualities) and supercurricular activities which show that you are building your subject knowledge beyond the requirements of your A Level. This can be through wider reading, research for your EPQ, online courses, taster lectures, academic competitions, Radio 4 podcasts etc.

Written work requested by colleges (for Oxbridge applications only)

This is likely to be essays written "in the normal course of your A Levels". Consistently high standards are needed to give you the option of selecting your best work to send.

Admissions Tests

You will be given support with preparing for these in school but sample papers are available on relevant websites. You need to familiarise yourself with them.

Maximising your chances

Your successful entry to any course depends on these nine factors.

Supplementary Questionnaires

Cambridge has sent applicants an SAQ (Supplementary Admissions Questionnaire) for many years. Recently other universities have started using them. To date this has included UCL (for their Management course) and some medical and vet schools where they will ask for detailed information about your work experience.

Interviews

Use forums such as discussions in lessons (and maybe around the breakfast table at home), debating, the #Now's the Time and Interview Workshops to get used to thinking aloud/making your ideas clear. Interviewers will explore your motivation and aptitude to study a particular subject. Genuine interest is better demonstrated by the things you have done outside of lessons rather than by the things you have had to cover in your A Levels, although making sure you are up-to-date with the academic work you should have completed at the point of interview is also important.

A Level Grades

If your UCAS application is excellent you may receive some Unconditional offers or reduced offers based on your achieved or predicted EPQ results. However, for most courses you will be made a conditional offer based on the A Level grades individual universities require you to achieve. Attending all your lessons, continuing to work hard and seeking additional support through subject clinics as necessary will help you to achieve your full potential and receive the grades you need for your first choice university.



Writing your personal statement

**You need to sell yourself as an outstanding student in only 47 lines (4000 characters).
How you structure it can vary but the following is the most common approach:**

Start with why you want to study the subject you have chosen. Try to say something eye-catching and personal about your motivation to study this subject.

Write about yourself as a student of that subject. Are you already studying it? If so, what aspects have you particularly enjoyed and what skills have your other A Level subjects given you that will be relevant? If you are applying for a subject you haven't studied at school, what makes it attractive to you and why are you a suitable candidate? What steps have you already taken towards exploring it? Be specific: cite particular areas/writers/ideas and give your views on them. Suggest interests/critical responses/ideas you could enlarge on if you are invited to interview (this is a good way to take some of the unpredictability out of the interview).

Then write about what you have learned from relevant work experience, community service, courses etc. Be specific about the skills you have developed and how they relate to your course. If you are applying for a vocational course, this section may take up most of your application.

Responsibilities held within school, participation in the life of the school should be included to show your willingness to be part of a community – after all, that's what a university is. Add any outside activities, interests etc. that you think will tell an admissions tutor something important about you as a potential student. Focus on anything out of the ordinary that you have done and what this demonstrates about you.

Finally, you can briefly summarise what you have to offer and what you want to get out of the course. This can include career ideas or reasons for deferring entry.

Your personal statement will go through several drafts. Start it early and give it a lot of thought. Take advice from your form tutor/mentor and subject staff, Mr Viesel and Mrs Cantwell.

TOP TIP – Read your personal statement out loud to ensure that it makes sense and has a logical flow. This is also a good way to spot typos.

Complete your personal statement as a word document while you are editing it and paste it into your UCAS application when it has been checked by your tutor.

You must provide your tutor with your final draft of your personal statement by the end of the first week of Year 13 if you are applying for courses with 15th October deadline.

Mrs Cantwell will complete a final check of your completed application.

Universities who may make unconditional or reduced EPQ offers

Some of our current Y13 students have received Unconditional Offers from the following universities during the last 2 years in some subject areas:

Anglia Ruskin
Birmingham
Birmingham City
Huddersfield
Hull
Keele
Lancaster
Leeds Beckett
Leicester
Lincoln
Manchester Met
Newcastle
Nottingham
Nottingham Trent
Oxford Brookes
Royal Holloway
Sheffield Hallam
Sussex
York St John

Some of our students have received reduced **EPQ Offers** (usual offer reduced by 1 grade) based on achieved or predicted EPQ results from the following universities during the past 2 years in some subject areas:

Bath
Birmingham
Lancaster
Leeds
Leicester
Liverpool
Newcastle
Nottingham
Queen Mary
Royal Holloway
Sheffield (NB are now reducing Medicine and Dentistry offers to AAB for students with an A or above grade at EPQ)
Southampton
York

Remember that EPQ results also boost your UCAS points for universities that make offers on this basis.



Making changes to your application

These are the guidelines from UCAS - always check the UCAS website for any changes.

Your address and phone number: If you change your address, phone number or email you can alter this in UCAS Track but should also pass on your new contact details to your chosen universities.

Choice of university or college: You can swap a choice in UCAS Track within 14 days of receiving your welcome email. You can only swap each choice once.

Additional choices: If you originally applied to less than five choices, you can add more up until June 30th as long as you have not chosen your firm and insurance offers yet. If you want to add courses after the application deadline (January 15th) you will need to contact university admissions tutors to check they still have places available. You can add additional choices via UCAS Track.

UCAS Extra: This is available from end February to early July for students who haven't received any offers or who have decided to decline all their original courses and apply for something different. You can apply for courses in Extra one at a time. It is important to contact universities who have advertised courses in Extra to ask if they are willing to consider your application before adding them through UCAS. If you are applying

for a different subject, they are likely to ask you to send them a new personal statement.

Single-choice applications: If you only made one choice on your original application and paid the reduced amount of £13, you can add more choices by paying extra. After 15th January you will need to check with universities that they still have places before adding them.

Changes to choice of course, year or point of entry: If you are happy with your choice of university but want to change your course or defer entry for a year you should contact the university directly. If the university agrees, they will notify UCAS about the change and send you a new offer.

Changes to Qualifications: You must contact UCAS immediately if your academic details change - including if you decide to drop a subject or decide not to complete your EPQ after you have listed it in your application. You must also tell the universities where you are holding offers or those that are still considering your application. Universities base their conditional offers on your exam details. If your details change, they may change their offers or decisions.

Accident, illness or personal problems that affect your exam results: If you suffer an accident, illness or a personal problem that could affect your results you must inform the school immediately. Talk to Mrs Cantwell and Mrs Rimmer about sending a supporting letter from the school and, in medical cases, get one from your doctor. You need to send details to your chosen universities as soon as possible after the problem has happened. Do not wait until your exam results arrive. The school can also notify your Exam Boards.

Tracking your progress once you've sent your application to UCAS: You can track your offers and accept/decline them using the Track system accessed through the UCAS website.

Withdrawal: You can withdraw your application to individual universities using UCAS Track if you decide you no longer want to receive an offer from them. This can be useful if you have received offers from your preferred universities and want to move ahead with making your Firm and Insurance choices.

If you change your mind after making your Firm and Insurance choices, you have 14 days to contact a UCAS adviser to make changes. You can contact UCAS Advisers via their student telephone helpline 0371 4680468.

Accepting your offers



When you hear from an institution you have applied to, tell your form teacher about:

- 1 The offer and conditions.
- 2 Interview and date.
- 3 Any rejections.

You cannot make Firm and Insurance choices in UCAS Track until you have heard from all the institutions you applied to. Please consult us before making any hasty decisions, particularly in relation to your Insurance choice.

Universities who make you an offer will usually invite you to an 'Offer Holder's Day'. You are not obliged to attend but might find it useful if you need to find out more about the course/university before making a decision about whether to accept the offer or not.

If this falls on a school day please seek permission from your tutor and make sure you catch up on any lessons you have missed.

From your five choices you can keep one firm offer and one insurance offer.

Your insurance choice offer should be lower and your Firm choice and, ideally, lower than your predicted grades - anyone can have a bad exam day.

Do not panic if you don't get offers straight away. Some course admissions tutors at some universities will not make any offers until after the official UCAS application closing date (15th January).

Students who have to attend interviews may not get a reply until the Summer Term.

You do not need to make decisions about your offers until early May. This is an important decision so take your time and seek advice.

When you have made your decisions you can accept/decline your offers via UCAS Track.

The UCAS points tariff

You will hear talk of 'UCAS points'. Some universities will make students an offer based on UCAS tariff points rather than on A Level grades.

UCAS have a Tariff calculator on their website www.ucas.com which you can use to calculate the points you are likely to get depending on your level of achievement in the subjects you are taking.

You acquire points through your A Levels, Maths AS, EPQ, and for some other accredited exams you may have taken at a high level eg in dance or music.

The points tariffs most relevant to current Year 12 students are as follows:

GCE A Level:

A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

Advanced Subsidiary (AS):

A	20
B	16
C	12
D	10
E	6

EPQ:

A*	28
A	24
B	20
C	16
D	12
E	8



Applying to courses not on UCAS

Degree/Higher Apprenticeships

Applications are made directly to employers or training providers.

18+ Art Foundation Courses

Applications need to be completed via each institution's online application form, not through UCAS.

The application deadlines will vary from college to college so students should check the colleges' online prospectuses for course/application details and dates of Open Days. Applicants will be interviewed and asked to take along a portfolio of their artwork.

These courses are free for under 19s so they are not tied into the Student Finance system.

Students normally live at home during this year as loans covering living expenses are not available. Students interested in Art and Design-based degree courses will need to check whether a foundation year is a requirement for entry.

Performance based Music/Dance/Drama courses

Applications for some Music courses are made through UCAS Conservatoires.

All the information you need to apply can still be found on the ucas.com website.

All courses will require an audition/interview.

You can apply from mid-July in the year before you want to start the course.

The deadline for all Music courses at Conservatoires is 1st October.

For all other Music courses the deadline is 15th January (in line with the UCAS deadline).

For some Dance and Drama courses you will need to apply directly to the institution.

NB You will need to apply for Student Finance in the same way as you would for other courses.

Applications to Study Abroad

David Hawkins, The University Guy, regularly delivers seminars and showcases with colleagues from universities in Europe, the USA and Canada. He specialises in supporting UK students with information and advice about applying to universities abroad.

Please contact Mrs Cantwell if you would like more information about studying abroad.



Useful websites

Searching for courses

www.ucas.com

Official site for everything related to your application

Choosing universities/student life

www.unistats.ac.uk

www.studential.com

www.whatuni.com

www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk

Course league tables

www.opendays.com

Sign up for university open days

www.qaa.ac.uk

HE quality standards

Money

www.gov.uk/apply-for-student-finance

Official student finance site

www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas

www.grantfairy.com

Search for scholarships and bursaries

Year out/Volunteering

www.yearoutgroup.org.uk

www.gapyear.com

www.ivsgb.org

International Voluntary Service (est 1931)

www.campamerica.co.uk

www.doit.org.uk

Voluntary work options in the UK

www.yini.org.uk

Year in industry

Apprenticeships/Employment

www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk

Search for Apprenticeships in your area

www.studentladder.co.uk

Work experience/school leaver programmes

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

Alternatives to going to university

www.prospects.ac.uk

Links degree subjects to particular careers

Other

www.fulbright.co.uk

Study in America

www.astarfuture.co.uk

Worldwide study options

www.eunicas.co.uk

Study options in Europe

www.lnat.ac.uk

Law Admissions Test

www.bmat.org.uk

Biomedical Admissions Test

www.ukcat.ac.uk

UK Clinical Aptitude Test

www.admissionstesting.org

Example papers for Oxbridge admissions tests

www.futurelearn.com

Free online courses



NORTHAMPTON
HIGH SCHOOL

GDST
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

northamptonhigh.co.uk/sixth-form

SF/v1.0/2020