

# **Sixth Form University Handbook 2026 Entry**



**St. Joseph's College**

# INTRODUCTION

## A Guide for Sixth Formers

As many of you will already have realised, your A levels are arguably some of the most challenging and important exams you will take in your life. The reward for all this hard work is the doors that are opened to the next steps in your career.

Deciding on the direction of these next steps is a challenging business and requires a great deal of careful thought, research, self-analysis, planning and preparation, but help is at hand!

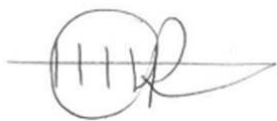
We are fortunate to have a dedicated and experienced set of form tutors and subject specialists who can offer guidance throughout the process from their views on the strengths of certain universities, to feedback and support on your personal statements.

Whilst this booklet is focussed on higher education, you may also be interested in researching other options such as apprenticeships or the job market – our dedicated careers officer will be on hand throughout the year to offer advice.

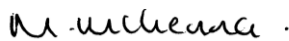
Within this booklet you will find details and guidance on the UCAS process as a whole including selecting the right course and university, key deadlines, guidance on personal statements and useful terms. Use it wisely and put the time in over the summer to research your options and start the drafting of your personal statement.

Importantly, remember that you are not alone – ask for support, plan carefully and remain focussed on achieving the best grades that you can.

We wish you the very best of luck.



Mrs H Hill  
**Head of Year 13**



Mrs M McKenna  
**Assistant Head of Year 13**

July 2025

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## PROGRESSING TO YEAR 13

The vast majority of you are already studying three subjects whilst a small number of you might be continuing with four into Year 13 or be waiting on your exam results to make a final decision.

If you have yet to drop to three subjects, your final choice of three A levels should be determined on:

- ❖ **Your summer results** – these should provide a strong indication of where your strengths lie, with the results providing a foundation for your on-going study into Year 13.
  
- ❖ **Your areas of interest** – often, a genuine interest in a subject can drive attainment so carefully consider which subjects really inspire and excite you intellectually.
  
- ❖ **Your future plans** – consider which subjects will link best to your future career / higher education plans. For instance, many university courses require certain subjects at A-Level. You need to clearly research your plans over the summer to ensure you make the right decisions.

## IS HIGHER EDUCATION FOR YOU?

- ❖ For most people, university study allows you to further particular academic interests. If you have a passionate interest, if you want to know more about your favourite subject, university is an excellent way to pursue that.
- ❖ Degree level study will also allow you to develop new skills and new personal qualities such as independence, self-reliance, adaptability, and the ability to communicate effectively, all of which are valued by employers.
- ❖ Perhaps most importantly, higher education provides a clear avenue into many jobs. Some professions, such as medicine and teaching, have been 'graduate only' for many years but as more graduates enter the job market, a higher education qualification is increasingly becoming the norm. A university education can offer enhanced career prospects for able graduates.
- ❖ For those who are uncertain what they want to do for a career, a degree course can provide additional time and focus and – provided you get a good degree – the doors of many careers will be opened.
- ❖ If you need another reason, university life is also GREAT FUN! The experience of living in a cosmopolitan student community, the experience of possibly living away from home, the chance to develop new friendships, all present exciting opportunities.

### **In brief . . . university education offers able graduates:**

- ❖ The invaluable opportunity to pursue their love of a subject
- ❖ A higher starting salary
- ❖ Enhanced career prospects
- ❖ The potential to earn more over their working life
- ❖ Access to graduate only professions
- ❖ Opportunity to acquire transferable skills
- ❖ That 'once in a lifetime' student experience...

**But it takes time, commitment and there is of course a financial cost as well so researching your options is incredibly important.**

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT SUBJECT

Committing to a particular subject is committing your time, energy and finances for at least three years. You need to ensure that it interests you deeply to gain the maximum from your university experience. **Research, research, research!** **USE UNIFROG**

You should focus on the course **FIRST** and then consider which universities might offer you the best options.

### KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A SUBJECT TO STUDY

1. If you have a clear career in mind, ensure you know what courses are required. Some career paths will dictate your choice of subject e.g. Doctors must study medicine!
2. Consider which of your A level subjects you find most interesting and research courses in these areas. Your course may not necessarily be clearly linked to your final career choice.
  - Not all lawyers have a degree in law but studied a subject they were passionate about and then 'converted' to law.
  - Outstanding journalists are more likely to have studied History, Politics or English literature than journalism.
  - Chemists may well become city bankers, teachers or politicians.
  - Most accountants did not study accounting at university.
3. Consider what interests you have outside of school / what type of environment you envisage yourself working in. **COMPLETE THE UNIFROG QUIZZES**
  - If you have a passion, there is almost certainly a course to suit it. You need to put aside some serious time to research. If you are planning to study a 'new' subject at university (i.e. not one linked to your A Level studies), then some background reading is essential.
  - You need to be certain that you have a genuine academic interest in the discipline concerned.
4. Discuss options with your form tutor / teachers – they have a vast wealth of experience so use it!
5. Review relevant websites and materials including the UCAS website, the Times and the Guardian Good University Guides, University websites and prospectuses.
6. Consider discussing your possible areas of interest with the Careers Advisor.
7. Finally - be realistic and honest with yourself – check the entry requirements and find a course that is in line with your grade predictions. Give yourself the BEST chance of getting an offer!
  - Some courses such as veterinary science often require A\*AA predictions, excellent GCSEs (six or more at 7-9 level) and work experience. If this is achievable for you, great! If not, don't despair. There are many courses and careers still linked to animal care and welfare.

There are over 50,000 undergraduate courses at over 395 providers in the UK. If you are still undecided about what to study, **USE UNIFROG!**

In addition, the following websites can be useful too:

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/choosing-course>

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/courses>

<https://discoveruni.gov.uk>

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT COURSE

Once you have decided upon a subject of study, you must then investigate the courses on offer in that subject. This will involve time and commitment to research on your part, since courses differ considerably in both approach and content.

- ❖ In 2021, 562, 060 students were accepted into university. This year had a record number of 33,805 people accepted onto nursing courses. 83,645 students were accepted onto business studies and administration studies in the same year whilst just 2,660 places were available for Veterinary sciences in 2021.

**Different types of courses include but are not limited to:**

- ♦ **Single Honours** - One subject is studied, within which a range of specialist options is generally provided. There may be a 'Foundation Year' during which several related subjects are studied, though not in any great depth.

- ♦ **Joint Honours** - Study of two separate but equal subjects, which may or may not be related. Sometimes there may be a 'major' and a 'minor' subject. e.g.

- ❖ Psychology **with** Sociology means that Psychology is the major subject; Psychology **and** Sociology means that equal time is allocated to each subject.

- ♦ **Combined Honours** - Study of several subjects, which may or may not be related, often narrowing as the course progresses to one or two subjects. Examples are: combined science, combined social sciences, combined arts.

- ♦ **Sandwich Courses** - A work-related placement in industry, commerce or the public sector usually takes place in the third year of a four-year degree, and you can expect to earn up to ~ £12,000 in your year out, or try a 'thin' sandwich with mini work placements.

- ♦ **Modular Courses** - You choose modules of different subjects, so building your own course within specific 'pathways' with the help and approval of your course tutor. You are likely to be assessed after completing each module, rather than just being assessed in your final year. Credits are built up towards a single, joint or combined honours degree.

- ♦ **Foundation Degrees** - These are full or part-time degrees directly linked to a specific area of work, and the course concentrates on skills and knowledge relevant to the workplace. The course includes assessed work experience. They are a vocational and different way to experience higher education. A full-time course takes two years, and then you have the option to progress on to an honours degree programme.

# CHOOSING THE RIGHT UNIVERSITY

Most students will apply to 5 universities. When choosing which universities to apply to, you need to consider two areas –

1. **The Course itself**
2. **The University**

## 1. THE COURSE – things to think about!

Courses with the same or a very similar name vary considerably from one institution to another. Research the options using the UCAS course search and the Guardian university guide. Then get the prospectuses for the courses that interest you and read the small print! You should consider the following factors when deciding where you want to apply.

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/choosing-course>

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

*The Times Good University Guide* goes through each subject and lists in order the top universities for that subject, especially in terms of their teaching. There are surprises: a ‘modest’ university may be a centre of excellence for a particular course, while ‘excellent’ universities may have a poor reputation in your subject.

1. **Course content / element of choice within the course** – Geography as a subject in one institution may offer you a free choice of options; the next institution will insist on a compulsory core studied in the first year, but that core could be just what you enjoy.
2. **Contact time with tutors** - Some departments offer one-to-one tutorials; in others, large group seminars for discussion.
3. **How the course is taught** – Research the frequency of lectures, seminars, practicals, fieldwork, and individual research. You might also consider how marking and feedback is done.
4. **Quality of teaching** - Look at the league tables for information (e.g. from the Guardian university guide).
5. **Amount of private study time** – Some courses have a high number of lectures in a week whilst others have relatively few lectures and seminars or tutorials, but expect you to organise your own time. Be honest, what suits you?
6. **Methods of assessment** – Some courses will have a focus on continuous assessment whilst others focus on final examinations.
7. **Length of degree** - Most courses take three years, but some are extended to four, five or six. Some also provide gap year options including years in industry or overseas.

**So - what should you be looking for in a degree course?**

The ‘best’ course is the course that suits you most. Consider the above factors and any other key points of importance to you. Make a list of your own preferences **FIRST** to help narrow down your choice and then start your more detailed research. **MAKE AS MANY SHORTLISTS AS YOU LIKE ON UNIFROG**



# CHOOSING THE RIGHT UNIVERSITY

## 2. THE UNIVERSITY – things to think about!

Choosing a university is a very big step. Your decision will have an enormous impact on your future life: it will affect the place you live, whether or not you enjoy your degree, the friends you make, and quite possibly your future career.

Many factors will influence your choice of university and, given that you have only five spaces (vets, dentists and medics have four) on your UCAS form, carrying out detailed research before making a decision is essential.

**USE UNIFROG** as your first port of call; you can save as many lists as you wish, with different criteria and different predicted grades. Unifrog links directly to University course pages so you can see in detail what the course looks like and what to expect. Be aware of the following points of difference:

1. **Entry requirements** - Check the entry profile and be realistic!
2. **Location** –
  - a. Near home..... or far away? Is cost of travel an issue?
  - b. Ancient buildings in a small city (e.g. Durham, St Andrews)?
  - c. A rural location (e.g. Lampeter)?
  - d. The seaside (Brighton)?
3. **Campus or city university?**
  - a. Do you like the idea of a city centre location (e.g. Leeds, Newcastle, Cardiff)....or...
  - b. Campuses on the edge of town (e.g. Reading, Exeter, Keele)?
4. **Size** – Does a small size appeal to you or would you rather a larger, wider community? Remember that some of the larger universities might have a collegiate system which makes them feel smaller.
5. **Facilities and Clubs** - What do you want in terms of sports, course and social facilities, social, religious or career-related clubs?
6. **Accommodation** – Halls of Residence or shared houses/ flats? Self-catering or meals provided? Have you many miles to travel to lectures?
7. **Special Needs** - from physical disability, to mental health issues, to dyslexia. All universities are obliged by law not to discriminate but some may well have better facilities than others.
8. **Finance** - it is really worthwhile looking at the section on '**student finance**' on [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) and doing a comparison of the fees, bursaries and financial support available. Some locations are more expensive than others - it costs more to live in London than it does, for example, in Liverpool, although the maintenance loan is higher for London students.
9. **Reputation and Academic excellent** – as per the websites on the previous page, there is a wealth of information available.

**Once you have narrowed it down, get visiting! Open days run throughout the year including during the summer and at weekends! This will allow you to gauge the feel of a University.**

- Wherever you choose to apply, you must select the ones that will suit you best and offer the kind of stimuli, environment and activities that you want and feel comfortable with.

# COMPLETING THE APPLICATION PROCESS - UCAS

All UK University courses are accessed via UCAS. Once you have registered on the UCAS website and have narrowed down your choices, the actual application process is quite simple.

**YOU NEED TO BE ORGANISED, MOTIVATED AND COMMITTED.**

- **MORE AND MORE OFFERS ARE BEING MADE PRIOR TO THE OFFICIAL CLOSING DATE PUTTING AN INCREASED IMPORTANCE ON EARLY APPLICATIONS.**
- **THE EARLIER YOU APPLY, THE BETTER!**

**ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR APPLYING ONLINE:**

- UCAS website: <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/register>
- Create a UCAS account in the UCAS HUB
- Your username will be the email address that you use to register. Create a password. **MAKE A NOTE OF IT.** On the site there is a 'Parent Guide' plus parents can also register to receive newsletters.
- Tick the Yes circle that you are applying 'through a school' and you will then be asked for the buzzword.
- **Our Buzzword is: 'yourdreamsyourfuture'.** You will then be connected to **St Joseph's College Edmund Rice.**
- Put yourself in the appropriate **Group:** either **Oxbridge/vets/medics/dentist** OR **MAIN**
- Click the 'Your application' tile to begin to complete your application.

**WHEN DO I APPLY?**

- Register/ Log in to Apply **2026** and **not** 2025
- **2nd September 2025**- First date of receipt for completed 2026 entry applications

**To ensure that your application can be processed in time for the UCAS deadline, your part of the application form must be completed and submitted to school by:**

- **26<sup>th</sup> September 2025** - School closing date for Oxbridge and medicine/dentistry/veterinary science
- **15<sup>th</sup> October 2025** - UCAS closing date for Oxbridge and medicine/dentistry/veterinary science
  - **Note that this is a school not an individual deadline - YOURS IS EARLIER (26th Sept)!**
- **4<sup>th</sup> November 2025** - School closing date for all other subjects.
- You must pay the **UCAS fee of £29.45** via ParentPay **BEFORE** your application can be sent off.
- **Students who are in receipt of Free School Meals do not pay the UCAS fee of £29.45 – it's free.**

**ELECTRONIC APPLICATION FORM -**

- Provides instructions and help notes for each section of the form.
- Has automatic checking prevents mistakes (except spelling mistakes).
- Allows your Personal statement to be 'pasted in' from a Word package.
- Has a 'Print Preview' function which allows you to view how your completed application form will look.
- When entering **qualifications** you will need to know the Exams Boards as well as your grades

# UCAS APPLICATIONS - KEY POINTS TO NOTE

- **BUZZWORD** = [yourdreamsyourfuture](#)
- **PERSONAL DETAILS**
  - a. Avoid nicknames and silly email addresses!
- **COURSE CHOICES**
  - a. You can apply for up to 5 courses (4 for Medicine, Veterinary Science and Dentistry).
  - b. Take care when entering course, campus and university codes.
  - c. Note that order is by University Code Number – you cannot state an order of preference.
- **EDUCATION**
  - a. You do not need to enter your nursery or primary school!
- **QUALIFICATIONS**
  - a. When entering qualifications, you need to know the exams boards as well as your grades.
  - b. **A Level subjects** should all be listed with grades pending 08/2025. **NO unit/module** info needed.
  - c. If you are **RE-SITTING** a qualification you need to enter it twice: once as a completed qualification with the grade achieved and, once as a qualification with the result pending.
  - d. Include your **EPQ** if applicable.
- **PERSONAL STATEMENTS**
  - a. There are three sections with question prompts. Personal statements are limited to 4000 characters count split across sections and a minimum of 350 characters per section.
- **YOUR REFERENCE**
  - a. Your tutor will write your overall reference having received input from each of your subject teachers. It will also include your predicted grades.
  - b. **MAKE SURE** - that your tutor is aware of any key achievements / work experience / activities that you have completed and could be beneficial to your application.
- **HOW DO ADMISSIONS TUTORS MAKE THEIR DECISIONS?**

GCSEs	A Level Predictions	Interviews	Admissions tests (if applicable)	Universities are looking for academic potential as well as academic record	Personal Statement
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## ADDITIONAL POINTS TO NOTE

- Remember to check with your **FORM TUTOR** what **GRADES** you have been **PREDICTED** by your **subject teachers** to ensure that they match the courses that you are applying for.
- Include any **Additional Admissions Test** if applicable.
- **FEE CODE** is generally '02 UK,Ch1,loM or EU' student Finance Services
- Questions on: **Disabilities, Being in CARE or Parental Education** – Answer Y or N.  
**DO NOT leave blank.**
- All **GCSEs** to be added.
- Do not ignore any 'red' highlighted areas - you must correct information in them.
- **Before submitting, check, recheck and proofread - It is your application, your future!**
- **DO NOT ASSUME THAT YOUR APPLICATION HAS BEEN SENT OFF!**
- **CHECK WITH THE UCAS Co-ordinator – Mrs James - in the FIDELITER BUILDING AS YOUR APPLICATION MAY HAVE BEEN RETURNED FOR EDITING. YOU WILL BE INFORMED BY EMAIL IF THIS IS THE CASE SO CHECK!**
- Further info: Full guide to applying on-line is on the website.

## ONCE YOUR APPLICATION HAS BEEN SUBMITTED (by school)

- **Once sent off**, UCAS will acknowledge that your application has been received and sent to your chosen universities. You can then see how your application is progressing by logging onto '**Track**'.
  - a. Each University considers the application and informs UCAS of its decision; then UCAS notifies you via **Track**.
  - b. Some university decisions may be conditional upon interview.
  - c. Note that the later you submit your UCAS form, the later these decisions will be.

**REVIEW THE OFFERS PAGE TO UNDERSTAND THE NEXT STEPS.**

# EXAMPLE

## HOW TO FILL IN THE 'EDUCATION SECTION' FOR UCAS

### Education

Please state the highest level of qualification you expect to have before you start your course

Below Honours degree level qualification

St Joseph's College (Edmund Rice Academy Trust) (30555, FT)

#### Additional Admissions Test **IF APPLICABLE**

Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT)	TOTAL	
Verbal Reasoning	DATE	500
Quantitative Reasoning	DATE	620
Abstract Reasoning	DATE	580
Decision Analysis	DATE	510

#### GCE Advanced Level: **NO UNITS/MODULES need to be filled in here**

Biology	DATE PENDING	OCR
Chemistry	DATE PENDING	AQA
Religious Studies	DATE PENDING	AQA

#### GCE Advanced Subsidiary (first award 2001): This is a re-sit - if applicable

Mathematics		DATE PENDING	Edexcel
Mathematics	C	DATE	Edexcel

*ALL AS results must be entered as SJC certifies all results- even if you received an unsuccessful grade  
UNITS/MODULES are OPTIONAL.*

#### GCSE:

Biology	8	DATE	Edexcel
Chemistry	8	DATE	Edexcel
English	7	DATE	AQA
English Literature	7	DATE	AQA
Mathematics	6	DATE	AQA
German	9	DATE	MEG
Spanish	9	DATE	WJEC
History	8	DATE	AQA

#### GCSE Double Award : (9-9 to 1-1)

Combined Science	67	DATE	AQA
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#### GCSE Short Course

Religious Studies	5	DATE	AQA
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#### Certificate in Digital Applications (CiDA):

Certificate in Digital Applications (CiDA)	Dist	DATE
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**If you cannot find a qualification click on: The 'Search' link**

## YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Writing your personal statement is probably the most important aspect of your UCAS application. Many students are competing for the same place and this is your opportunity to prove that you have something special and unique to offer.

From 2025 you will be writing the new style Personal Statement with three questions to help you scaffold your answers. The process can be daunting but try to consider the bullet points below; remember the clear advice and guidance shared during Best Next Steps Week.

- Try and find some exemplars before you start writing.
- Mind map your ideas – everything you can think of that makes you who you are!
- If you know which course you want to do, attempt an opening paragraph explaining why you have chosen the course and what your plans are for the future / link your choice to your chosen career if possible.
- Indicate the level of interest in your field of study perhaps through referencing work experience, further reading you have done, visits or projects you have undertaken. Do not say you love it, show it, explain it! What is it that excites you about it?
- Reference your academic suitability for the course and also provide rationale for your chosen A level subjects.
- Don't forget to explain the personal benefits you gain from everything you do, eg: prefect duties, sporting activities, part-time jobs, DofE, Immersion, Lourdes, Edmund Rice Camp etc. Avoid listing skills! State how you have developed your skills. Be clear on what your individual strengths and qualities are.
- Be succinct! You have a limited number of characters and you don't want to bore anybody!
- Avoid starting every paragraph / sentence with 'I' – vary your language.
- Your final copy, however, must be coherent and the paragraphs must be linked. The final paragraph should relate back to the first if possible, summing up why you would be ideal for the chosen course.
- Expect to do a number of drafts until you have perfected it. Make sure you give it to only one teacher at a time!
- When you think you have finished, proofread very carefully, preferably aloud, checking punctuation, grammar and spelling as you go. Ask someone else to check it as well before giving it to your Form Tutor.
- **Then, sit back and wait for the offers to come pouring in!**

There are lots of places where you can find advice on writing a personal statement; start with Unifrog and the UCAS Website. Whilst these are useful, it is important to remember that you are writing a PERSONAL statement and that you should **beware of plagiarism and relying on AI tools**, - UCAS uses a system called '**Copycatch**' to detect plagiarised statements.

# MAXIMISING YOUR CHANCES OF AN OFFER

## Strategy and tactics are called for!

### 1. Apply early

- a. Be ready to go in September. More and more universities are making early decisions; it is more difficult to receive an offer once the university has reached its quota.

### 2. Be realistic!

- a. Every year some candidates find themselves with no offers and in Clearing in August because they made an inappropriate and unrealistic selection of courses.

### 3. Have a spread

- a. You maximise your chances of a place by selecting universities that, between them, will make you a range of offers. Even if you are brilliant, it is unwise to submit a UCAS application listing only highly prestigious universities and only highly competitive courses.

### 4. Be consistent

- a. Your final choices should normally be for the same subject or for closely related subjects. A mixture suggests uncertainty. It also makes it very difficult for you to write a personal statement.

### 5. Maximise your work experience.

- a. Some vocational courses require more than just academic qualifications for entry. To prove that you have the potential to acquire the skills required for a particular course and/or career, you may require considerable evidence of work experience, work shadowing, contacts with the profession, awareness of what makes a good specialist, and an understanding of what you are about to undertake.

### 6. Take time with your personal statement

- a. What you write on your UCAS form is critical. The only opportunity you have to express yourself is in the 'Personal Statement' section: you are 'selling' yourself. You can use any particular experiences, interests, talents and passions you have that are *relevant to the course you're applying for*.

### 7. Have a sensible insurance offer

- a. You are permitted by UCAS to accept two offers and must notify UCAS of your decision by the date that UCAS specifies in Spring 2026. If you do choose to reject your lowest offers, you must ask yourself whether this is a realistic or sensible strategy.

### 8. Be very certain that you have chosen the right course

- a. It is impossible to change your mind once your application form has been sent off. If in doubt, leave one of the five places free for adding to later. Students (and parents) must also be aware of the following: if you meet or exceed the grades of your firm choice offer, you must accept that place; if you fail to meet this but do meet the grades of your insurance choice offer, you must accept that place or withdraw completely from the current UCAS competition, take a Gap Year and apply afresh. You must therefore take great care in selecting both firm and insurance institutions and be prepared to go to either!

## OFFERS

The school deadline for standard (non-early entries) is 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025. We would strongly encourage you to apply well before 14th January 2026. However, all applications received by this date will be considered.

Once submitted, some universities / courses can take a number of weeks or even months to consider your application and make a decision. Do not read too much into a long wait!

Whilst some universities / colleges will make final decisions based purely on your UCAS application, a number will invite you to interview before making any offer.

## INTERVIEWS

If you receive an invite to attend an interview and wish to have a mock interview / advice, please complete an 'Interview Request' form with as much notice as possible (available from the FB Office and to be returned to Head/Assistant Head of Year 13) so we can seek to accommodate your request.

## UCAS TARIFF POINTS EXPLAINED

- UCAS tariff points are used by some universities and colleges (around a third) when making conditional offers.
- Instead of asking for grades (e.g. BBC), a university may express the offer as 112 points.
- More traditional universities are more likely to make an offer stipulating grades, not points. Also, some may not, for example, consider BBB at A level to be the same as ABC at A level.
- Entry requirements and offers that state tariff points may also require a minimum level of achievement in a specified subject, for example '128 points from a minimum of three A levels to include grade A in A level Chemistry',
- Bear in mind that there is no double counting. With certain qualifications like A-levels, which build on an earlier qualification like AS, only the higher qualification will be counted. This principle also applies to music and speech & drama exams at grades 6, 7 and 8.
- Although tariff points can be accumulated in different ways, not all points will necessarily be acceptable for entry to a particular course. The achievement of a points score, therefore, does not give an automatic entitlement to entry and many other factors are taken into account in the admissions process.



### Example of a UCAS Tariff table

This table shows the new Tariff points for some popular qualifications.

A level	AS level	EPQ	Tariff points
A*			56
A			48
B			40
C			32
		A*	28
D		A	24
	A	B	20
E	B	C	16
	C	D	12
	D		10
		E	8
	E		6

#### Example (A level)

A student with AAB at A level and a B grade in a fourth AS subject will have a tariff score of 152; however, some university courses may specify that they would like the student to reach a certain target without the fourth AS, in which case the student's score in this example would be 136.

There is also a range of helpful videos which explains the Tariff in more detail on the UCAS website.

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/entry-requirements/ucas-tariff-points>

## UNIVERSITY DECISION OPTIONS

There are three different decision options that you may receive:

#### ❖ U = Unconditional

- No further qualification requirements. Be careful to fully read the terms of these offers – sometimes they may stipulate that they need to be your **firm offer** for the offer to be Unconditional.
- **Note that any future employer will still want to see your A level results so you do need to keep working!**

#### ❖ C = Conditional

- The offer is subject to you achieving the grades / points stipulated in the offer e.g. BBB / 120 UCAS tariff points (*see table above*)

#### ❖ R = Rejection

- Unfortunately, they have not offered you a place.

## TO ACCEPT OR DECLINE?..... THAT IS THE QUESTION!

- Once you have received **ALL** your decisions, you must **reply** to universities through UCAS by the **deadline date** specified
  - If applicants receive all decisions by **3<sup>rd</sup> June 2026** if you received all your offers by **13<sup>th</sup> May 2026** otherwise their application will be declined by default (DBD), including those in Extra.
  - If applicants receive all decisions by **15<sup>th</sup> July 2026**, they must reply by **22<sup>nd</sup> July 2026**, otherwise their application will be declined by default (DBD), including those in Extra.
- a. You are **not** required to accept offers as they arrive, so take the time to be sure of the decisions you make before replying.
- b. You will receive a **statement of decisions** (with a reply slip) when your final university decision has been received.
- c. If you do not reply with your decisions by the deadline given, UCAS automatically declines all offers on your behalf!
- You are permitted to hold two offers –
  - A **firm offer** (your first preference) and
  - An **insurance offer** (usually at a lower offer level than your firm offer)

Once you have replied to all offers, UCAS sends you a final statement of your replies and of all the decisions made. This cannot subsequently be altered.

- The **UCAS Extra** system operates from **26<sup>th</sup> February 2026** and closes on **4<sup>th</sup> July 2026** for students who applied for 5 places and either received no offers, or who have declined any offers they did receive. UCAS Extra allows you to start again, but you can only submit one course application at a time, and you are limited to courses that have not been filled already.
- The **UCAS Clearing** system is mainly used in August (although it opens on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2026) for those who fail to meet the terms of their conditional offers and have been declined. It is essential that you should be at hand (i.e. not on holiday) from mid-August onwards to discuss appropriate action and make full use of the Clearing process. Admissions Tutors do not look favourably on approaches from parents in Clearing; they wish to talk to the prospective student.
- If you have registered with UCAS prior to **14<sup>th</sup> January 2026** but not submitted an application, it may still be possible to gain entry in 2026. If universities have spaces available after the closing date for applications, you may be able to view these on the UCAS website. However, you should not assume that there will be spaces on any courses if you miss the deadline of **14<sup>th</sup> January 2026**. From **30<sup>th</sup> June 2026** any new applicants will automatically be entered into **UCAS Clearing**.

## CONSERVATOIRE APPLICATIONS

All courses at conservatoires have a strong vocational, performance orientation, and course structures are reflective of the industry. This means graduates from conservatoires will be accustomed to the ways of working, hours, and expectations of the industry they are going to work in, as they will have practised this throughout their course. Each conservatoire has its own strengths and specialisms, so it is important to research all of them to find the right fit for you. To help decide, research what graduates from each conservatoire have gone on to do, to see if this fits with your aspirations.

The conservatoires in the UCAS Conservatoires scheme are:

- Royal Birmingham Conservatoire
- Leeds Conservatoire
- Royal Academy of Music
- Royal College of Music
- Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
- Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM)
- Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
- Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Other conservatoires may operate outside the UCAS Conservatoire scheme and you may have to apply to them direct or through the UCAS Undergraduate scheme. If the conservatoire is not listed above, check with them to find out more about their admissions process.

### **Your Application:**

- **You can choose up to six courses** – in no preference order.
- You can only apply once in a cycle.
- If you have applied in previous cycles and want to apply again, you'll have to submit a new application.
- Conservatoires will be able to see where else you've applied, but your choices are listed in no preference order.
- There are 'study type' options for music courses - for other subjects this will state 'Main specialism'.
- There is usually no need to apply for more than one course at any particular conservatoire.
- **You will need 2 references** - an academic reference and a practical reference. These must be completed by two different referees.

**For courses starting in 2026**, your application should be in by these dates to ensure consideration by the conservatoires:

- **2nd October 2025, 18:00 (UK time)** – for music courses
- **14th January 2026, 18:00 (UK time)** – for most undergraduate courses including, dance, drama or musical theatre courses

However, there are some exceptions, particularly for certain audition locations, international applicants or postgraduate courses, so check the conservatoire websites for full details.

**If you miss the deadline** for your course, you **must** ask the conservatoires whether they have vacancies before applying – they will still process your application either way, but it will be deemed 'late' and some conservatoires might not consider you.

# TIMELINE

## IN REAL TIME . . . 2025

<b>June – August</b>	<p>Visit Virtual Open Days for you to get a feel of each university, and to provide you with more information.</p> <p>Research into work experience and/or do several things closely related to your subject choice.</p> <p>Register and take tests if relevant e.g. UCAT.</p> <p>Improve personal statement – look at MOOCs and ‘Read, Watch, Listen’ in Unifrog; if applying for Oxbridge, start to prepare essays ready to send off (where required).</p>
<b>September/October</b>	<p>Submit a draft personal statement to your Form Tutor via Unifrog.</p> <p>Get A Level predictions confirmed</p> <p>Ask tutor/teachers for their opinions on your personal statement.</p> <p><b>ENTRANCE EXAMS –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Register for tests including LNAT/TMUA/ELAT etc if relevant.</li></ul>
<b>Then ASAP...</b>	<b>APPLY!</b>
<b>26<sup>th</sup> September</b>	School deadline for Oxbridge, medicine, veterinary, dentistry applications.
<b>4<sup>th</sup> November</b>	School deadline for all other UCAS applications.

## QUESTIONS?      If you have any questions, ask –

- Your form tutor
- Mrs James, the UCAS Co-ordinator in the Fideliter Building
- Mrs Hill (Head of Year 13)
- Mrs McKenna (Assistant Head of Year 13)

## STUDENT FINANCE

In addition to the materials shared in HE week, UCAS has some excellent guidance on student finance and how to apply, as does the Martin Lewis website.

However, please note that finance details change all the time and so it is important that you refer to the latest information on the direct gov website below.

<https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/overview>

Student Finance – England – the key website

<https://www.gov.uk/extra-money-pay-university>

Bursaries, scholarships and awards—an excellent place to start

<https://www.gov.uk/career-development-loans/overview>

Career Development Loans (eligibility is limited)

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/finance/student-finance-and-funding>

Guide figures for tuition fees in UK Higher Education (last year's but still interesting!)

[www.gov.uk/student-jobs-paying-tax](http://www.gov.uk/student-jobs-paying-tax)

HM Revenue and Customs – the legal stuff including details on paying tax on part time jobs

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

Student Loans Company Limited

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/finance-and-support/extra-funding>

UCAS student finance – how to find out about extra funding

# THE TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK

## What is it?

The new Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) has recently been introduced by the Government in England to recognise and encourage excellent teaching in universities and colleges.

## Why is it useful?

It is intended to help students choose where to study, by providing clear information about teaching provision and student outcomes. It is a voluntary scheme and includes a gold, silver, and bronze award system decided by an independent panel of experts basing decisions on several criteria, including continuation rates, student satisfaction, and employment outcomes for undergraduate students.

- **Gold** for delivering consistently outstanding teaching, learning, and outcomes for its students. It is of the highest quality found in the UK.
- **Silver** for delivering high quality teaching, learning, and outcomes for its students. It consistently exceeds rigorous national quality requirements for UK higher education.
- **Bronze** for delivering teaching, learning, and outcomes for its students that meet rigorous national quality requirements for UK higher education.

# DEGREE AND HIGHER LEVEL APPRENTICESHIPS

More and more students are enquiring about apprenticeships with much more information covered on this during HE week in July.

## What is a Degree of Higher Apprenticeship?

*“An Apprenticeship is a **job**, in a **skilled occupation**, that requires **substantial and sustained training**, leading to the achievement of an **Apprenticeship standard** and the development of **transferable skills to progress careers**.”*

Source: Department for Education

It's a real job, with hands-on experience, a salary and the chance to train while you work. You're treated just like all the other employees, with a contract of employment and holiday leave.

Source: [www.apprenticeships.gov.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk)

If successful, you will be awarded:

A Degree (or other Higher Qualification)

A Certificate of Apprenticeship

## What is the difference between a traditional degree and a degree apprenticeship?

Apply via UCAS

Study full or part time

Pay tuition fees

Study for 3 years (on average)

Learning and assessment will mostly take place in the confines of your programme of study

Apply to employer apprenticeship vacancy

Blend study with a full time job (20% of paid time is protected for off the job training)

No tuition fees – Cost covered by employer

Dependent on apprenticeship and agreement with employer

Learning and assessment will have application in your workplace

## So what's the challenge?

They are not without their challenge – they are very competitive with successful candidates needing to balance work commitments alongside studying for a full degree - managing time can be difficult.

They are hard work but, if it is the right thing for you, worth it!

# **GLOSSARY OF USEFUL TERMS**

*(including details from UCAS.com)*

## **Apply**

The name of the UCAS online application system.

## **Bachelor's degree**

A three or four year course you can take in undergraduate higher education after you've finished further education – also known as a 'first degree' or 'undergraduate degree'. Most courses are either a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science.

## **Buzzword**

The code that you will be given in Higher Education week which links your application to St. Joseph's in your application. This is only used once to register.

## **Changed course offer**

If your exam results do not meet the conditions of your offer, you may receive one of these. Additionally, they are also received if the university or college has made changes to the courses they run.

## **Clearing**

If you didn't get a place on a course – whether you didn't receive offers, declined your offers or didn't get the grades you needed – Clearing allows you to apply for courses that still have vacancies.

## **Conditional offer**

In your application, an offer of a place on a course subject to conditions. To be accepted on the course you'll need to meet the conditions – usually related to your exam results. This is a common type of offer for students applying direct from further education.

## **Confirmation**

In your application, the outcome of a conditional offer you've accepted. If you meet the conditions your place will be made unconditional (meaning you've got a place on the course) – if not the offer will be declined.

## **Conservatoire**

A provider of performance based music, dance and drama courses.

## **Deferral**

In your application, this is what you do if you'd like to carry an offer over to start it in the following academic year.

## **DipHE**

A Diploma in Higher Education is a higher education qualification offered in the UK and generally awarded after two years of full-time study at a university or higher education institution.

## **Discoveruni.gov.uk**

A useful website for students to research and compare subjects, universities and colleges – from student satisfaction ratings to stats about getting a graduate job after you finish the course.



**Entry requirements**

This is what the course provider recommends you need to do/have to get on the course – from qualifications and specific subjects or grades to interviews, admissions tests and medical requirements. You aren't guaranteed an offer if you meet or already have these.

**Extra**

In an undergraduate application, Extra is a service you can use to apply for alternative places if you do not hold an offer from your first five choices.

**Firm choice**

In your application, an offer you accept as your first choice.

**First class honours**

Most UK course providers use a degree classification system. First class honours, or a 'first' is the highest level degree classification awarded.

**GTTR**

The Graduate Teacher Training Registry – the name of the former teacher training application service. The GTTR was replaced with a new application service in 2013 – UCAS Teacher Training.

**Honours**

For example an 'honours degree'. Most first degrees in higher education can come with 'honours'. It's not a grade as such – it just means it's possible to get your degree 'with honours', which would be an extra indication of quality.

**Insurance choice**

In your application, an offer you accept as your second choice – just in case you don't meet the conditions of your firm offer.

**Invitation**

In your application, you may receive an invitation from a university or college asking you to attend an interview or audition, or to provide a portfolio, essay or another piece of work.

**Personal ID**

In your application, the 10-digit number you get when you register to Apply – printed in a 123-456-7890 format on every letter we send you. (You'll be asked for this if you get in touch with our Customer Contact Centre.)

**Personal statement**

A piece of text applicants write to show why they're applying and why they'd be a great student for a course provider to accept.

**Point of entry**

In your application, which year of the course you start at – for example '2' means you'd start in the second year of the course.

**Predicted grades**

The grades a teacher, tutor or other adviser qualified to remark on a student's academic suitability believes they will achieve when they complete their secondary qualification.

**Reference**

This is a recommendation on an applicant's application form from a teacher, adviser or professional.

**Sandwich course**

A course with an additional year where you work in a profession you're studying.

**Scheme code**

In your UCAS application, this is used along with your Personal ID to identify your application.

**Tariff**

The Undergraduate Tariff is the system for allocating points to the different qualifications you can use to get into undergraduate higher education. Not all qualifications will be included on the Tariff. It is for use in admissions only and is not transferable to the job market

**Track**

The name of the UCAS online tracking system where you can see how your application is progressing. Here you can reply to offers and make amendments like changing your email address etc.

**UCAS**

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service in the UK. This includes the main UCAS undergraduate application, as well as the other schemes they run, e.g. UCAS Conservatoires (performing arts), UCAS Teacher Training and UKPASS (postgraduate).

**UCAS Conservatoires**

The name of the performing arts application service (formerly CUKAS).

**Unconditional offer**

In your application, an offer of a place on a course with no conditions – the place is yours if you want it.

**A NOTE OF CAUTION – DON'T STOP WORKING IF YOU GET AN UNCONDITIONAL OFFER – FUTURE EMPLOYERS WILL STILL WANT TO SEE YOUR A-LEVEL RESULTS!!!!**

**Undergraduate**

The first level of study in higher education. If you graduate from an undergraduate degree you can move on to postgraduate study.

**Unifrog**

The name of the online careers platform used by our students: the first stop to look up university courses, apprenticeships, suitable careers and what is needed to get into them, plus a whole host of resources to use to stand out in job and university applications.

**Unsuccessful**

In your application, either you haven't been made an offer or you haven't met the conditions of a conditional offer.

**Withdrawal**

In your application, before the decision has been made to make you an offer or not, either you or the university or college can withdraw a choice.

*With thanks to John Hampden Grammar school for sharing of resources*