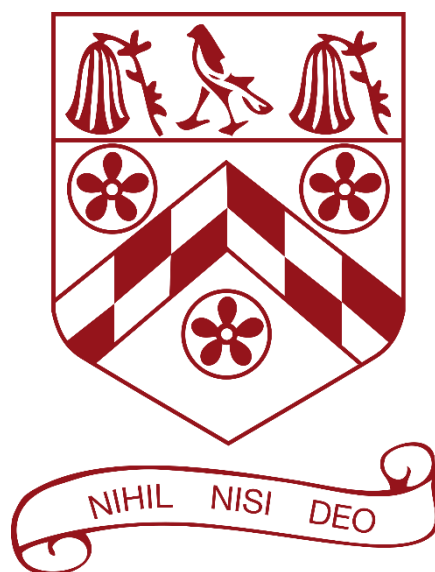


Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School



UCAS APPLICATION 2022-2023

**Student Information
Booklet**

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QUICK REFERENCE SHEET

Abbreviations

UCAS: University and College Admissions Service

UMS: Uniform Mark Scale

UKCAT: UK Clinical Aptitude Test

BMAT: Biomedical science Aptitude Test

LNAT: Law National Aptitude Test

CF: Conditional Firm offer

CI: Conditional Insurance offer

UF: Unconditional Firm offer

School Deadline for applications for Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science and Oxbridge:

Friday 16th September 2022 (*UCAS Deadline for submission 15th October*)

School Deadline for applications to all other courses:

Saturday 15th October 2022 (*UCAS final deadline is 25th January 2023*)

Maximum number of courses students can apply for on their UCAS form:

5

Maximum number of medicine courses students can apply for: 4

The fifth choice on the UCAS form can be used for a related subject e.g. Biomedical Sciences

UCAS Extra

Runs from March to the end of June. Can be used by students who have:

- already made five choices;
- received decisions from all these choices; and
- either had no offers or declined all the offers you have received.
- See Page 19 for further details.

Admissions tests: These are used by some institutions for the most competitive courses. They vary from course to course and must be researched and booked by the students. The most common are the UKCAT (UK Clinical Aptitude Test), and the BMAT (Biomedical Science Admissions Test) required by some universities for Medicine or Dentistry; the LNAT for some Law courses and the STEP paper in Mathematics. Oxford and Cambridge use a number of different admissions tests for different courses (requirements can even vary by college). Some are taken at interview at Cambridge, but many need to be sat in school in November of Year 13. **Candidates must register for their required tests themselves, usually by the time they send off their UCAS forms in October of Year 13. Consult the course and college website to check which test may be applicable to you, then see Mrs Ludlow, School Examinations Officer, to register.**

UCAS Tariff Points

Extended Project Qualification	A level	Tariff Points	BTEC Extended Diploma	BTEC Diploma
		168	D*D*D*	
		160	D*D*D	
		152	D*DD	
		144	DDD	
		128	DDM	
		112	DMM	D*D*
		104		D*D
		96	MMM	DD
		80	MMP	DM
		64	MPP	MM
	A*	56		
	A	48	PPP	MP
	B	40		
	C	32		PP
A*		28		
A	D	24		
B		20		
C	E	16		
D		12		
		10		
E		8		
		6		

1. What is UCAS?

UCAS is the Universities and College Admission Service. It provides a central application service for full-time undergraduate courses in the UK. UCAS works with over 400 universities and colleges and over 50,000 courses.

This means that if you want to go on to higher education after A Levels, it is highly likely that you will be submitting a UCAS application at the start of your first term in Year 13. Most students who have been through this will tell you that it is a time-consuming process and can be very stressful. That is why you have a range of help and support provided for you and this booklet is just the beginning.

What the UCAS process involves

- 1) Choosing relevant courses. They may be all the same subject at different Universities, or variations on a theme.
Reflect on your skills and consider which courses might be right for you. Think carefully about where your skills lie and what you would enjoy doing every day for 3 or 4 years.
- 2) Choosing up to 5 universities.
Investigate institutions where these courses are available. Find out as much as you can about the course structure and style as each subject varies considerably from institution to institution. Consider your personal needs, look closely at their entry requirements (also admissions policies if you can find them out) and find your 5 best matches!
- 3) Putting together your application
You will have to gather information about past examination results and former schools, know your Local Education Authority etc. but writing your personal statement is the most important part of this form. You will work on this with your tutor, Mr Eassom and subject teachers as necessary.

All of this needs to be completed by 15th October 2022 (16th September for Oxbridge applicants, medics, dentists and vets). The first half-term of Year 13 is extremely busy so you will need to have the first draft of your form done before you leave for the summer holidays at the end of Year 12. At the very latest this should be by the end of the summer break.

2. Researching Choices

Entry Profiles

These are found through the 'Course Search' section of the UCAS website. Type in the subject area you are interested in and you will be able to look at entry requirements and course details for all the programmes linked with that subject. This information is particularly useful as it is provided by UCAS, not by the institution, so it is unbiased, unlike prospectuses which are there to 'sell' the university at its best.

HEAPS Guide

A copy of this book will be kept by Mr Eassom and Ms Jordan for reference. It is a concise listing of all courses available for your year of entry and what qualifications you need to get a place on them. You can also find this guide online. (This book is normally available in May each year.)

Useful websites

The Times and The Guardian newspapers both publish online university league tables which can be defined by subject. (The Times website requires a subscription)

[Discover Uni and Unistats - Office for Students](#)

Includes official data on each university and college's satisfaction scores in the National Student Survey, jobs and salaries after study and other key information for prospective students.

[Top UK University League Tables and Rankings 2021 - Complete University Guide \(thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk\)](#)

Or create a unique table based on your own requirements.

[The Student Room](#)

An online discussion forum for Secondary School, Sixth Form and university students.

Please note: Study room B11 normally has useful up to date published lists of the top Universities including by Social Inclusion.

Twitter.

Not just for 'social' networking! If you have a Twitter account, you should be following @ucas_online, Student Finance @SF_England the universities or departments you are interested in (some admissions offices have their own Twitter feed to keep applicants up to date with the process).

You should also follow course-specific and current affairs accounts to keep up with the latest developments and debates. For example:

News, analysis, current affairs	@BBCBreaking @jonsnowC4 @BBCRadio4
Business	@FinancialTimes @TheEconomist
Languages	@lemondefr @el_pais @SPIEGEL_Netz
Politics	@Number10gov @UKParliament
Law	@cpsuk @ukSupremeCourt
Technology	@TechCrunch @wired
Science	@newscientist @NatGeo @bbcscitech @ProfBrianCox
Poetry and Literature	@GuardianBooks @TheTelegraphBooks @TheRSC

This is just a selection, there are many more!

Prospectuses

These are still useful as they provide a picture of the university as a whole and go into more depth than Entry Profiles. You can find a large selection of them in the study room B11 and the latest editions are normally issued early in March.

Family, friends, professionals.

It's always worth getting an insider's perspective on universities and courses so talk to older friends, siblings and other family members to find out what their experiences were like. What did they do before applying? With the benefit of hindsight, would they do anything differently if they had to go through it again? If you already have an idea of what career path you would like to follow, make sure you talk to people in that profession and find if any courses are essential/desirable.

Soul search

It is essential that your chosen course appeals to you as you will spend most of the next three or four years working on it. Doing a degree as a means to an end does not always lead to a successful career. If you love the idea of being a lawyer but the law degree looks extremely dull, it is unlikely you will suddenly start enjoying legal work on graduation!

Open Days

Attending university and college Open Days is a great way to get a feel for the place. It's very difficult, if not impossible, for students to make their minds up about somewhere just from reading a prospectus or visiting a website.

Most Open Days take place during term-time, so it is essential you choose visits carefully and seek permission to attend from Ms Jordan or Mr Eassom. It is worth knowing that a lot of universities do now offer some Open Days at the weekend. During your visit, you should also be shown around various parts of the university or college, such as the student union, library, accommodation areas and the department in which you might end up studying. There might be opportunities to meet some of your potential tutors and chat with students currently on the courses in which you are interested.

Most students agree that Open Days have enabled them to make an instinctive decision – the place may or may not feel right. Making the effort to explore a university or college in this way should prevent you applying to go to somewhere just because it “looks nice” in a prospectus or on a website. If you don't explore beforehand, you risk feeling disappointed when turning up to start your course, only to find that it's not what you expected.

Each year, UCAS publish a *University and College Open Days* booklet, which also has details of taster courses and education conventions. A copy is available in the school library.

Open Day Policy

We encourage you to attend universities you are seriously considering but it is obviously important to take as few days off as possible in Year 13. Please consider your Open Day choices carefully and remember that most universities now have Open Day events on Saturdays.

NB. Later in the year when students receive offers, it is increasingly common for these to come with an invitation to visit which is not an interview. In some cases it is worth the student taking up this invitation but it should be remembered that universities are keen for visitors so they get as many 'firm' acceptances as possible. If an offer has been made it is not retractable and the student is not obliged to go and take valuable time off school.

Your Long List – this must be finalised by the end of Year 12

When you start researching, you may have 2 or 3 different courses you are interested in. If they are wildly different (e.g. Medicine, Fine Art and Human Resource Management) you need to have a serious re-think. However, it is fairly common for students to be deciding between English and History, Economics and Law or Biochemistry and Life Sciences. Remember that combination courses, for example English with French, have fewer applicants than, for example, straight English, and that means higher acceptance rates. If you are

really struggling with the decision, find out what modules are studied in the first year of each course at your chosen universities (it will vary from institution to institution) and ask yourself what you would rather spend all day doing.

Your Short List – This can be finalised when you return in September of Year 13.

This is the tricky bit so discuss it thoroughly with your Tutor, Mr Eassom, Ms Jordan or subject leaders. You have five choices which are entered on the form in alphabetical order so you do not have to show any preference at this stage. However, you should have a clear idea of how your chances of success vary at each institution. After considering entry requirements, your current grades, your predicted grades (see page 12) and other factors to take into account (e.g. Does this university prioritise certain applicants, including lowering the grades requirement? Is my chosen course oversubscribed here? Will an interview be required here and will that improve/damage my chances?) you should feel that you have:

- **TWO** fairly secure choices and
- no more than **TWO** choices where you could be taking a risk.

This next piece of advice sounds obvious but *more people than you think end up at their 'back-up' university* so **DON'T WASTE CHOICES ON PLACES YOU DON'T WANT TO GO TO.**

Every one of the five should be a course and an institution where you would be happy to spend the next three or more years.

NB Students applying for Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Sciences may only choose FOUR such courses. Your fifth choice must be an alternative e.g. Biomedical Sciences.

Other Factors to Consider

Going to university or college is a big commitment. Whilst you must always ensure that the guidelines above are followed so that the course is right for you, there are other important factors that you should put in the mix, which will have different influences for each person applying.

- **How far will you have to travel backwards and forwards? Car/train etc.**
- **Do you want to be near to or far from home and family?**
- **Do you really want to study there for the next three, four or five years?**
- **Does the course have exams, coursework, or both?**
- **What's the difference between a lecture and a seminar?**
- **Living costs in that area. Where is the accommodation related to the campus?**
- **Is it a City or Uni campus?**

- **Facilities in the Uni and City/Town that attract you – sports, drama, social, societies etc**
- **Accommodation type and costs. Some student halls can be paid for the whole year and others just for term times.**
- **Have you been to an open day or taken a virtual tour?**

Things to check when sorting out accommodation

1. **When does the tenancy start and end?** If it does not include the holiday periods, is this negotiable, or can you make alternative arrangements?
2. **When are the rental payment dates?** Can you meet them? Check them against the dates when you will receive student loan payments. Are the dates negotiable if they don't align?
3. **Are you able to budget to pay your rent?** Have you investigated where you can get financial advice on campus? Check student support services, who will be happy to point you in the right direction.
4. **Do you need a guarantor?** If you don't have anyone you can ask, [speak to student services](#) to see if they can help. Some universities and colleges can act as guarantors, or help you bypass this requirement.
5. **Do you need a deposit?** If finding a lump sum to pay in advance proves difficult, speak to your university or college. Again, some can bypass this requirement, or they may be able to help you through their [hardship funds or a bursary](#). ***PLEASE NOTE THAT IT IS NOT UNCOMMON FOR UNIVERSITIES TO ASK FOR THE DEPOSIT WITHIN A WEEK OF YOU RECEIVING YOUR OFFER ON RESULTS DAY AND BEFORE YOU MAY HAVE SECURED YOUR LOAN.***

If you are feeling pressurised into taking expensive accommodation, seek advice from student support or the students' union before you make a decision you might regret later on. They will be able to offer advice and can provide a list of alternative accommodation that may be cheaper.

The students' union can help you look through accommodation contracts before you sign them. Once you've signed, you are legally responsible for the full tenancy under the terms agreed, so you must make sure it is the right option for you.

Accommodation over holiday periods

Most universities provide year-round accommodation for estranged students. Some may even be able to bypass or adjust any deposit requirements, or act as a guarantor for private accommodation. Student services can offer more information about what's available at your university or college – it's a good idea to contact them before you apply to find out more.

Bursaries and funding are often available to help estranged students pay for additional accommodation costs incurred during holiday periods, or for those taking work placements – [find out more](#).

(Whilst these are all important considerations, you will not physically need to act on the financial aspects such as applying for student loans until you have had your offers and you have accepted your Firm and Insurance options. Mr Eassom and Ms Jordan are always on hand to discuss this part of the process)

3. The Personal Statement

There will be various examples and guides to be found on-line regarding how to write your statement. There is NOT a be all and end all version so please consider that when drafting yours. The one relating to Oxford/Cambridge and for Medicine/Veterinary purposes will need to be quite specific and exact and would need consultation with Ms Jordan particularly.

Mr Eassom has produced his own guidelines, copies of which will have been given to you, along with excellent examples of the same produced by UCAS themselves and one from Reading University. Please see Mr Eassom if you haven't got these.

In simple terms you should make several drafts and when initially happy with what you have produced, then discuss with your tutor. If you feel there is something very specific related to the course you are applying for, then feel free to talk to your subject teacher to see if they can offer advice accordingly. This is your chance to show the University Admissions officer your strengths, personality and interests. This statement is increasingly important as pressure for places mounts and interviews are rarely held for many subjects other than some specific ones where this is an important part of the selection process, such as with Medicine and Veterinary practices. Please ensure that you liaise with Mr Eassom to agree the final version of your statement before putting into your application.

A good personal statement...	A bad personal statement...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ shows that the applicant has researched the course well and has good subject knowledge ✓ is written in the applicant's own voice ✓ has a clear structure ✓ ties in a range of activities by focusing on specific skills learned ✓ uses varied vocabulary ✓ is unique! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ features plagiarised ideas (e.g. pyjama story) ▪ is <i>too</i> original or odd ▪ makes false claims about work experience or books read ▪ contains negative comments ▪ uses a boring formula or lists experiences without comment ▪ employs hyperbole ▪ has several spelling mistakes

Content

The focus of your statement must be the course you are applying for and the studies and experiences which make you a strong candidate.

Extra-curricular activities can be discussed if relevant but remember that an admissions tutor in a History Department for example, is much more interested what you think about History, than in your captaincy of the netball team or part-time employment. These experiences are useful and the skills you have acquired from them should be discussed, but to a lesser extent.

The basic framework of your Personal Statement:

Reasons for choice of course

School studies and skills acquired through A Levels

Relevant work experience

Additional interests & experience outside school

Concluding statement

Reasons for choice of course

Enjoy the subject – why?

Enjoy aspects of the subject – which?

Look forward to studying in greater depth – state specific interests

Work experience confirmed interest – how?

Possesses required skills for the course – which?

Post degree aim? (where useful)

Relevant Work experience

Please note that this section is very important in applications for vocational courses such as Medicine, Veterinary Science, Dentistry and Primary Education. If you are applying for a straight subject course, discussion of your study experiences is more important.

When you write about your work experience, consider the skills you have acquired e.g.

- communication
- working independently
- team-work
- working to deadlines/time management
- problem solving
- initiative
- leadership
- analysis

School Studies

Your A Level studies form the basis of your application. Whatever your subjects, admissions tutors will want to know what you have got out of them and what skills they are helping you to develop which you can employ on your university course. Discuss any topics you have enjoyed and wider reading you have done. Consider the skills you are developing such as: analysis, research and investigation, evaluation, essay-writing, presentation, teamwork.

Additional interest and activities in and outside school

Avoid listing activities; try to make them relevant to your application. Tutors are looking for things that make applicants stand out and possible things to discuss at interview. Below is simply an example and interests can cover a multitude of things!

Interest	Outline	Relevance
Reading novels	E.g. Science fiction/historical/classic	Enjoy a wide range of literature
Travel	Unusual / educational visits	Curious & eager learner Mature and ready to live away from home
Part time work	Paid or voluntary	Skill base, particularly if connected to course
Cooking		
Concerts		
Films		

Again, consider what skills have been developed through school activities such as

- Sport
- Drama
- Musical instrument lessons/orchestra etc
- Prefect duties
- Voluntary/charity work
- School trips
- Clubs & societies
- Organising events
- Helping staff
- Public speaking

Some Hints on Supporting The Statement

For the rest of Year 12 up until your application is processed you should build up as much activity/evidence as possible to display things that support your application on top of the obvious one of Work Experience, which could now easily be Virtual as well. Some examples are:

- Summer School attendance
- University Taster sessions
- Discussions with Academics or people in the subject field
- Visiting relevant institutions such as museums, businesses, headquarters etc
- Virtual Work Experiences
- Doing on-line courses
- Reading books outside the curriculum but relevant to what you want to do
- Attending seminars
- Do your own research
- EPQ being done related to your subject
- Projects completed
- NCS, DofE or similar schemes
- **BE BOLD AND PRO-ACTIVE**
- **There are no limits to what you can do that supports your application – Ms Jordan and Mr Eassom are always available for advice.**

Concluding Statement

Something not covered by the above which relates to the degree course
Summarise how anything already mentioned might indicate that you are suitable for university.

Word of Advice

Don't ever proclaim to be **“the one”**, **“the ideal candidate”** or **“have all the necessary skills”** as it may well put the reader off! In the same way as with a job application where it is the employer who would tell you if you were the one!

Example & Analysis of a Personal Statement

(THIS IS NOT A 'PERFECT' EXAMPLE. IT HAS STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES WHICH ARE ANALYSED OVERLEAF)

GUILTY!!! I confess!!! I want to study law!!!

From an early age I was attracted to law as it is such an important aspect of Society and more recently the evolution of laws has interested me. I have taken part in exchanges, travelled internationally and this together with a Belgian mother has given me a cosmopolitan outlook and fuelled my interest in European law. Following my GCSEs in which I gained the Latin prize I chose a mixed combination of A levels. By studying mathematics and Chemistry I have acquired the scientist's respect for logic, reason and critical analysis and from the study of German I have developed a greater sense of linguistic awareness and enhanced my oral expression and writing skills.

Spending two weeks at one of the region's largest firms of solicitors gave me an insight into property, litigation and company law. This was followed by a week's mini-pupillage at a barrister's chambers. During this week I attended the courts which dealt with small criminal matters. Having spent three weeks at Reuters before this, the work experience I gained confirmed that I wished to study Law at degree level. Reuters showed me the importance of the law in international business and I eventually hope to pursue a career in company law.

At school, I am involved in Model United Nations and I have helped organise, re-establish and promote the school's debating society. I have debated in front of 4000 delegates at a conference in The Hague and this improved my debating and language skills and strengthened my knowledge of current affairs as well as developing my self-confidence. In addition to my interest in debating I am computer literate and I enjoy journalism, albeit on a small scale, as I write for the Sixth form magazine.

Swimming is my main sport for which I received the Bronze medallion in life saving. I also play netball for the school and have joined in hockey and tennis where I class myself as a willing and enthusiastic player.

In my final year at School I have been appointed a prefect and selected as a member of the Christmas Ball Committee and the Year Book Committee.

Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good, short summary of reasons for studying law • Good indication about why this unusual combination of A levels was studied and this is used to demonstrate relevant skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gimmicky opening line – a serious candidate? • Some mistakes in grammar and punctuation – capital letters. Watch out for repetition of the same word. • Mentions some extra-curricular activities without

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two relevant work experiences commented upon positively • Debating experience is highly relevant 	<p>explaining their worth/relevance</p>
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Remember the following:

The personal statement should be **47 lines (4,000 characters including spaces)**. Draft it carefully and ensure that it is well-written and technically accurate. Ensure you recruit help especially from your Form Tutor and then **finally with Mr Eassom**. This is your way of standing out from the crowd so make sure it is excellent. The statement must be typed as a Word document and can then be pasted into your on-line UCAS application.

Because you are competing with numerous other students remember: IN SIMPLE TERMS THE STATEMENT NEEDS TO BE SAYING TO THE READER “PICK ME AND NOT THEM”!

Seeking help with your Personal Statement.

Your Form Tutor and Mr Eassom will help you with your Personal Statement but, if he or she does not have a background in the subject area you are applying for, it is also advisable to have **ONE** other subject teacher look at it. Please note that it is not helpful to hand out several copies of your statement to different people and have them all giving you advice at once. Everyone will have their own opinion of the tone and style and it must be **YOUR** voice. **Personal Statements should not be handed to teachers like essays to be marked. You may ask a subject teacher to read and discuss it with you, but not to take it away and redraft it.**

Mr Eassom is on hand at all stages of this process and he should agree the final version before it is cut and pasted into your application.

4. Completing and Submitting your UCAS Form

In the Spring and Summer Term PSHE Programme, time will be set aside to focus on preparing for your future. As part of this, you will receive a tutorial on the different parts of the UCAS form and the information you need to complete it.

The deadline for your final completion of the form is Friday 15th October 2021 (**17th September for early applicants**). When you have completed all sections and are happy with your choices and Personal Statement, you need to:

- Print out your form in full

- Write the particular entry requirements next to each of your five choices on the form (use the requirements specified in the Entry Profile)
- Hand your form to Mr Eassom or Ms Jordan for discussion and approval.
- If they approve the application, you can now log on and click on ‘pay and send’ to pay UCAS directly online.
- At this stage, your application is sent to the school’s administration for more checks and completion of your references and predicted grades. **Before we send it on to UCAS, it is possible for us to send it back to you if you have made a mistake, just see Ms Jordan or Mr Eassom.**

5. Your Reference and Predicted Grades

When you have completed your sections of the form and clicked to ‘send’, you should allow about a week for the reference and final checks to be completed. This may vary, depending on the number of students submitting in a particular week. Mr Eassom will collect comments from each of your subject teachers and collate them into a form suitable for inclusion in your application. You are free to ask to see your grades before submission of the application.

DO NOT LEAVE YOUR APPLICATION FOR MS JORDAN TO CHECK UNTIL THE LAST DAY OF SUBMISSION AS THIS MAY NOT GIVE HER TIME TO PROCESS ESPECIALLY IF THERE ARE ITEMS YOU NEED TO ADDRESS.

Your predicted grades on your UCAS application are based on the potential you have shown in each subject and your performance throughout the course so far, along with any growth that is expected before the end of Year 13. Simply, it is a level that the teacher is comfortable that you could reach.

When choosing your final five university courses therefore, you should use your Expected Grades (from your school report) as a guide for typical offers. When your UCAS form is sent off in Year 13, you have only your GCSE and any results from external examinations you may have sat to support your application. **You are advised not to choose courses for which typical offers are beyond your predicted grades, as it is unlikely that you will receive an offer.**

You are advised not to choose courses for which typical offers are more than a grade above your Expected Grades in more than one subject. By doing so you are leaving room for the University to NOT make you an offer as they have plenty of applicants who meet the grades. However, it is not uncommon for an offer to be made, BUT it will only accept you if you get that higher grade. Considering the difficulty of Year 13 work, accepting a place which requires such a significant improvement is a high risk.

Your subject teachers will confirm your predicted grades in the Autumn term of Year 13. Predicted grades should not be negotiated with subject teachers and will be based on the criteria detailed above – your performance in Year 12 and potential in Year 13.

Once your form has been submitted to UCAS by the school, it cannot be returned for any amendment.

6. Admissions Tests

The table below shows some of the most commonly required admissions tests.

Test	Courses	Institution(s)
UKCAT	Medicine, Dentistry	27 institutions (see website)
BMAT	Medicine	Cambridge, Oxford, UCL, Imperial & Royal Veterinary College
LNAT	Law	Birmingham, Bristol, Durham, Glasgow, Kings, Nottingham, UCL
HAT	History	Oxford, Cambridge
STEP	Maths	Cambridge, Warwick
ELAT	English	Oxford, Cambridge
TSA	Computer Science, Natural Sciences, Engineering, Economics, PPE, European Social & Political Studies, Land Economy	Cambridge, Oxford, UCL

If you are applying for any of the courses and institutions above, **you will need to know:**

- the deadline dates for registration and completion of the tests
- the venue and procedure – at school or at a central test centre? Written or typed? Time limit? (Blessed Hugh Faringdon can accommodate some of the tests but not all).
- the cost and availability of bursaries if required
- the availability of practice papers (often online)

There are several companies offering training, preparation and practice of admissions tests, often at a considerable cost. Remember that the tests are designed by experts to test aptitude, not knowledge. You can't 'revise' for them, and universities' data shows that there is little correlation between candidates who receive coaching and those who don't.

It is important, however, to familiarise yourself with the format and timing of the papers by practising past questions. You should be able to find samples online.

7. Interviews

If you are applying to Oxford or Cambridge, you will probably be invited for interview early, in December. Interviews are likely to be requested for Medicine,

Law, Dentistry, Veterinary Sciences and other vocational courses. **When you are given a date, see Miss Jordan to arrange a mock interview in school.**

Sometimes these come with an invitation to visit which is not an interview. If the offer is from one of your preferred institutions and you feel it is quite a high offer for you, it may well be worth visiting and getting to know the tutors. This could go in your favour on Results Day if you don't quite get the grades. However, offers with invitations to visit are increasingly popular as universities are also trying to get as many 'firm' acceptances (more on this later) as possible. If you feel like the offer is easily achievable, have already visited the institution or have even changed your mind about going there, do not feel obliged to go and visit. The offer is not retractable once it has been sent to you and you should always think carefully about taking time off valuable lessons during Year 13. See Miss Jordan if you are unsure.

Offers – what do they mean?

Conditional offer – things to think about

- You will need to achieve certain grades or Tariff points in your qualifications – is the offer realistic for you?
- Work hard to get the best grades you can in your school or college qualifications.
- If you don't meet your conditions, don't panic – check the **Track** system in UCAS to see if your uni or college has been able to confirm your place.
- You may also be able to find a place through **Clearing or Adjustment**. **More on Page 20/21**

Unconditional offer – things to think about

- An unconditional offer might take the pressure off, but your school or college qualifications are still important. Finishing your studies, doing the work, and taking your exams are all really important to prepare you for uni or college – you're going to have to work when you get there too!
- A lot of employers take A levels and other qualifications into consideration when reviewing job applications.
- If you make an unconditional offer your firm choice, or a conditional offer that is made unconditional, you've committed to studying at that uni or college.
- You might be entitled to a scholarship or other reward if you do really well in your exams.
- You don't get an insurance choice.
- You might not be able to enter **Clearing or Adjustment**.
- Even though you've already met the academic requirements, you might also need to do some other tasks, such as undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) check, provide proof of your qualifications, or meet some financial or medical requirements.

8. UCAS Extra

If you have applied through UCAS and are not holding any offers, you may be able to apply through Extra for another course. Extra allows you to apply for courses with vacancies between the end of February and the end of June. In Extra, you apply for one course at a time using the [Track](#) service on the UCAS website.

To use Extra you need to have:

- already made five choices;
- received decisions from all these choices; and
- either had no offers or declined all the offers you have received.
- You are not limited to how many extra choices but can only do one at a time – apply and if rejected again then find another.

If you decline your offers and add an Extra choice, you will not be able to accept any of your original choices later.

9. Making your choices

At the end of March/ start of April, you will be asked to select a **FIRM** offer and an **INSURANCE** offer. You can of course do this earlier if you have had all your relevant offers and are happy to proceed.

FIRM choice – your favourite course from the offers you have received.

INSURANCE – a course you would be happy to study, ideally, though not necessarily, with a lower, more easily achievable offer.

This seems simple but a number of difficult situations could arise...

Frequently Asked Questions

What if my firm choice has a lower offer than my insurance?

Your firm choice should always be your first choice, as that is where you will be automatically placed if you achieve the grades of the offer.

If you just miss the grades and your 'firm' institution does not accept you, it is unlikely that another institution who gave you a *higher* offer will accept you now unless they were hugely undersubscribed and now need to fill places (unlikely but not impossible).

My first and second choices have made me the same offer. Is it worth putting one as an insurance?

Yes. If you miss the grades for your firm choice, your insurance could still accept you if you have only missed by a few marks and they need to fill places.

My favourite places have both given me very high offers. I have one low offer for a place I don't really want to go to, should I keep that as an insurance?

No. When you officially name an insurance place, if you miss the grades for your firm place and the institution does not accept you, you will be automatically placed on your insurance course. **DO NOT CHOOSE A COURSE YOU DO NOT WANT TO DO!**

I only have one offer, does this matter?

No. Often, if you are applying for a competitive course like Medicine or English, you should only expect one offer. This highlights the importance of **ONLY CHOOSING COURSES AND UNIVERSITIES YOU DEFINITELY LIKE.**

I don't have any offers. What should I do?

Don't panic, you still have options. Read the above section on UCAS Extra.

I've changed my mind since last November and I want to do a different course I haven't applied for. What should I do?

Decline all your offers and use UCAS Extra to apply for your new chosen course.

I have five reasonable offers but there's only one course I definitely want to do. Do I have to select an insurance?

You clearly did not read most of this booklet during the application process but no, you do not 'need' an insurance. **ONLY SELECT THE COURSE(S) YOU WOULD DEFINITELY WANT TO DO.**

It's Results Day, I've got in to my first choice but I would now prefer to go to my second choice. What should I do?

Once you have selected a course as your firm choice, you are committing yourself to studying there if you meet the grades offered. It is difficult to get out of this commitment, but not impossible. See Ms Jordan on Results Day.

10. Results Day

From 8am on Results Day, you should be able to log on to your UCAS tracker to see the final results of your application. You could have been accepted already or the university's decision could be pending. If this is the case, you need to come into school prepared to get on the phone (have names of admissions/course tutors and their phone numbers ready). Often, if you have missed your grades, you can still be accepted, it all depends on how many applications the course received that year. It helps to be in school when you are making these phone calls as you have more information about your results and can argue more convincingly. (School staff will be around to help but a teacher calling on a student's behalf to explain why they really want to go to university is much less convincing than a personal call from a potential student!)

Adjustment

If you discover on results day that you have actually got better results than predicted, you may consider looking at another course which previously you would have thought was out of reach. To do this you go in to “**Adjustment**”.

Please click on the link attached which explains the process.

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/apply-and-track/results/ucas-adjustment-if-youve-done-better-expected>

If you have not achieved the grades offered by your firm or insurance choices, you still have options. You go into ‘Clearing’.

What is Clearing?

Clearing is used by applicants who have not secured a place at university or college for the current year. It matches applicants to suitable courses with vacancies. This begins in August and in 2018 more than 60,000 people gain a place during Clearing every year.

If you are flexible and you have reasonable examination results, there is still a good chance you will find another course. Consider carefully before making a commitment though, don’t panic and choose a course for the sake of it. Make sure you think it through and talk it over with family and teachers.

Course vacancies for Clearing are published on the UCAS website from mid-August.

Remember - the majority of our students do get in to either their first or second choice universities. Those who don’t are often just as happy at the course they found through Clearing if they have searched wisely. Miss Jordan will still be available to help should you choose to re-apply for 2024 entry, just call the school to make an appointment to see us.

You will have worked hard to get your university place so enjoy every minute when you get there!

GOOD LUCK!

The Sixth Form Team