

UCAS Procedure – Senior School

1. Students are given training and information about the UCAS Application Process and use of the on-line UCAS Apply system in the spring and summer term of Year 12.
2. Personal Statements are discussed and examples are studied. Girls are allocated a member of staff to act as their PS mentor and they are encouraged to meet with them prior to breaking up for the summer so that they can start writing their statement during the holidays before they return in Year 13.
3. Girls use Unifrog to identify appropriate courses and universities which are then automatically emailed to their Form Tutors.
4. Sixth Form Tutors act as the major point of **contact for each girl's UCAS application** once they return in September. They, along with the Head of Sixth Form, the Careers Adviser and the staff **from the relevant subjects, offer advice about the girls' choice of courses/universities**, direct them towards the most relevant and appropriate resources and offer feedback and guidance on their personal statement.
5. **The girl's** choice of courses should allow for a spread of required grades to avoid disappointment once results are issued. Both firm and insurance choices must be discussed with Form Tutors prior to submission to ensure they offer the best possible chance of success.
6. Subject teachers write their UCAS subject references in Unifrog for each girl during the second half of the summer term. Sixth Form Tutors then use this plus additional information from extra-curricular activities **to create a final UCAS reference in support of the student's application.**
7. Upon completion, each student checks her UCAS application with her Form Tutor, including the checking of examination results. **She then 'pays and sends' the application.**
8. The Head proofreads each reference and the Director of Sixth Form then amends or adds to the school reference as necessary. The Director of Sixth Form then attaches it to the electronic application and emails the student to make an appointment with the Head.
9. The student reads her reference with the Head and the student then returns to the Director of Sixth Form where the electronic application is sent to UCAS.

UCAS GUIDANCE FOR SIXTH FORM TUTORS – 2021-2022

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE UCAS PROCESS

- Each member of your form can apply for 5 courses (only 4 of which can be for medicine, veterinary science or dentistry.)
- No university can see which other universities a student has applied to.
- Normally the range of courses applied for are at different institutions, but this is not a requirement. Girls can apply for different courses at the same university.
- Applicants do not have to make 5 applications, although they should be encouraged to complete all 5 choices on their initial application form wherever possible. Courses can be added after a form has been received by UCAS.
- Girls should be heavily discouraged from applying for unrelated courses. This has an impact on the personal statement and means that neither subject gets full attention. Given that **'passion for the subject' is the most cited criteria from Admissions Tutors, applying to unrelated courses can have a detrimental effect on the application.**
- Students must pay on-line for their application.
- ***UCAS Deadlines***
- ***Applications received after the deadline are classed as 'late' and only considered at the institution's discretion.***
- The early deadlines set by NHSG are to allow form tutors to read through the student's final application and to finalise their reference before sending it to the Head of Sixth Form. This then has to be added to the electronic application form. Any delay in meeting these deadlines creates a lot of last minute activity that increases the chances of errors slipping through. Please stress to your tutees that these deadlines must be met.
- The deadlines for applications to arrive at UCAS are:
 - 01 October CUKAS Conservatoire Applications
 - 15 October Oxford/Cambridge, Vet Science, Medicine, Dentistry
 - 15 January All other UCAS Applications (except some Art & Design Courses)
 - 24 March Deadline for some Art & Design Courses

Tracking

- UCAS Website: www.ucas.com Students can track progress of their application using their UCAS ID and password.

Offers and Decisions

- Students can receive offers from universities from November onwards. (Usually by the end of May for those meeting the 15 January deadline.) Offers can be made in one of two ways, tariff points (e.g. 128 points) or grades (ABB).
- Students must notify UCAS of their decisions by a deadline date that relates to the date of the *last* university reply. The first deadline is usually late April/early May.

Oxbridge Candidates

- Girls applying to Oxford or Cambridge cannot apply to both. Students should check relevant websites for details of any additional assessments required (eg HAT, PAT) and must register via Mrs Harrison by 20th September.

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Medics/Vets/Dentists

- Applicants for medicine, veterinary science and dentistry can only apply for 4 courses.
- These applicants can add 1 additional course to make up to 5 choices; it is advisable that this is for a related course. This additional course can be added to their initial application form, or later in the cycle (by telephoning UCAS with the relevant university and course code).
- Medics, Vets, Dentists and Oxbridge candidates often have to sit an additional aptitude test (UKAT/BMAT/HAT, HSPS). **Strict deadlines apply.** Students should check relevant websites for details of the registration and test dates. Students sitting BMAT must register via Mrs Harrison by 20th September.

Art and Design

- All applicants for Art & Design courses **must** see Mrs Harrison

UCAS Extra

- This is an additional application process that runs from mid-March to end of June. This allows those students not holding any offers (but who have received replies from all 5 universities to which they previously applied) to apply to one further institution at a time. Not all courses are available through UCAS Extra. Students must check on the UCAS website for vacancies available.

Practical advice on writing informative references from UCAS:

Firstly, read the application so that you can understand the applicant's intended career direction, chosen courses and preferred places of study. When completing your reference, you do not need to repeat any of the information that the student has given, unless you want to comment on it. Please note that you should not include a direct reference to any particular institution, as your reference will be read by all of your student's chosen universities and colleges.

The Process

Your job is to compile the subject and extra-curricular references into one unified reference. This should not exceed 4,000 characters (this includes spaces) or 47 lines (this includes blank lines). This excludes the predicted grades, which are entered separately. If, however, you are **struggling to edit it to this length, it's better to leave it too long to enable the Head of Sixth Form to do the final edit.**

The Paragraphs

An outline of the student

A short paragraph giving a brief outline of the student, her character and her strengths.

Academic qualifications – one paragraph for each subject

This is the most important part of the reference and you may have to go back to subject staff if they have not written positively or in enough detail in their subject references. Take each subject and identify what the student has already achieved, what qualities they are developing, and how they are attacking any difficulties. Has the subject teacher given evidence to support what they say?

Key Skills – this is not essential, but it is a good opportunity to mention anything that doesn't fit easily into a subject paragraph.

The key skills are communication, application of number, information technology, improving own learning and performance, working with others and problem solving. Universities are keen to see that students have these skills but do not expect formal qualifications.

Extra Curricular/Positions of Responsibility

Try to avoid simply making a list of these. Instead, give examples of the skills that have been gained from your tutee's positions of responsibility and extra-curricular activities.

Personal qualities

This is your opportunity to comment on your tutee's readiness for higher education, as well as her ability to take responsibility for her own work, to make new relationships and to live away from home. Give evidence of her personal qualities and her ability to meet new challenges.

Don't forget the basics such as honesty, reliability, punctuality and attendance. Personal qualities are especially important in references for any of the caring professions and teaching. Will the student make a good doctor/teacher? Why? Comment on her proposed career ambitions, attitude, motivation and commitment. Has she done work experience or voluntary work relevant to her chosen course? If relevant, give your opinion on her suitability for this career path. UCAS consider suitability for the chosen course as one of the most important parts of your reference.

Special Circumstances

If the applicant has been held back by health or family difficulties, the admissions tutor should be informed so it can be taken into consideration when considering the application. Most students are unwilling to put these **points in their personal statement so, with the student's** permission, they are put in the reference. Likewise, with specific learning difficulties. If the applicant's situation differs from the normal curriculum policy, it is helpful to give details.

EXCERPTS FROM UCAS REFERENCES

Examples of Opening Paragraphs

Zoe is a warm, affable sixth former who is keen to succeed and approaches all tasks directly and efficiently. She is open, honest and appreciative and has an easy relationship with staff and pupils alike. She is a capable student who tackles her work with alacrity; she participates readily and often perceptively in class discussion and shows a responsible attitude towards her study.

Yvonne is a quietly spoken student with a great sense of humour; she has a gentle nature and will always put others before herself. Despite her impressive string of examination results, her teachers agree she is one of the most unassuming students they have ever had the pleasure to teach. She is genuinely delighted when she does well and is humble of her considerable achievements.

Independence of thought, intellectual maturity and excellence sum up Xanthe's academic profile. Beneath the composed and self-reliant exterior lies a fiercely original thinker with an extremely active mind. Xanthe is a doer, at her best when she is busy getting things done and excelling in all that she turns her hand to.

Wilhelmina is, quite simply, an outstanding sixth former who approaches life with great enthusiasm and a winning smile. Following on from her excellent GCSE results, she continues to combine a high achieving academic profile with a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Such is her potential that she was one of four girls recently selected from this strong year group to attend a Young Leaders' Conference. She is hard working, highly motivated and determined to succeed in all that she does.

Veronica is a truly outstanding student. She has followed on from her excellent GCSE results with a year of sustained academic excellence and looks set to see this through to a quartet of very high A grades at A level. She is a delightful personality; unassuming, individual and deeply thoughtful, with a smile to brighten up anyone's day. From her very strong year group, she has been elected Deputy Head Girl, a post she takes very seriously and in which she brings to bear so many facets of her endearing personality.

Examples of Extra-Curricular Paragraphs

In addition to Ursula's academic achievements, she also has outstanding personal qualities. She is a gifted and accomplished sportswoman, showing great talent in hockey, netball, tennis and rounders. She has represented her County at hockey and has given freely of her time in representing the school for many years in all these sports. But it is her ability to empathise with and motivate others which makes her such an exceptional student. She has worked with Mencap and with autistic children, instilling in them the strength and confidence to pursue their own goals. She has been chosen for the high profile post of School Games Captain for her final year at school and her contribution has been outstanding. She has given up much time to help organise school sports events; her tremendous drive and determination have helped to make everything to which she turns her hand a complete success.

Tabitha has an easy confidence and a friendly manner that makes her popular and well-respected by staff, peers and younger pupils alike. She shows real empathy when looking after younger pupils in the after-school club and her caring nature is also evident in her work at both the Disability Sports Academy and a school for disabled children. In her role as an elected Senior Prefect, Tabitha carries out her duties with great commitment, making valuable contributions to many aspects of school life. One of Tabitha's many strengths is her time-management; she is well organised and is able to combine her academic studies with many extra-curricular activities including music, CCF and the challenges of the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Young Enterprise Scheme. She demonstrates excellent leadership qualities in these activities yet also works well as part of a team, encouraging others to succeed and infecting everyone with her enthusiasm.

Susannah is a most responsible and trustworthy student with excellent leadership and organisational skills. She makes a full and enthusiastic contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. Alongside her responsibilities as a highly respected Senior Prefect, she sings as a soloist in the choir, plays the trombone and is an accomplished tap dancer. She has also participated in an archaeological dig, has given her lunchtimes to teach at the Year 6 Italian club and completed the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. During her expeditions she not only demonstrated a high level of personal skill and tenacity, but was also able to remain cheerful under extremely testing conditions. She has outstanding powers of communication, and has shown the ability to speak confidently and clearly to large groups of pupils of all year groups.

Examples of Closing Paragraphs

Zoe is popular with her peers, sympathetic to others and capable of deploying a wry, self-deprecating humour. She has clear ideas of what she wants to achieve and deserves every success. She would contribute academically and socially to university life and would be a most rewarding student.

Yvonne has high aspirations and a growing awareness of what she needs to do in order to meet them. She is well-motivated and purposeful and has a great deal to offer any university faculty. She comes to you with our highest recommendation.

Xanthe is energetic and enthusiastic in all that she does and she handles her life with maturity and initiative. She would make a significant contribution to undergraduate life in any number of ways and will thrive in the intensity of university surroundings. We recommend her to you without reservation.

Tabitha will be an outstanding undergraduate student who will thrive academically throughout her time at university. She has considered very carefully her choice of career and is clearly committed to medicine. She could not have made a better choice; she will make an outstanding doctor. We recommend her to you without reservation.

Susannah is a delightful sixth former who has the academic ability, determination and motivation to succeed on a course in Zoology. She is fully aware of the demands of her chosen course, which she has thoroughly researched. Her strength of character, charming personality, leadership qualities and impressive inter-personal skills will make her an asset to any faculty. She will thrive in the academic intensity of university life and we recommend her to you without reservation.

Rebekkah will make a great lawyer. She has presence. She is knowledgeable. She exudes authority. She is incredibly hardworking and determined to succeed, with extensive reserves of initiative, inner confidence and self-reliance. She is a student of impressive ability. She thrives in similar company and will relish being stretched in the academic life of any university. We recommend her without reservation.

GUIDANCE FOR SIXTH FORM TUTORS - ADVICE ON PERSONAL STATEMENTS

The Personal Statement is the student's individual 'sales pitch'. The following are suggested guidelines on how to cover all the angles that the Admissions Tutors will be looking for. We don't, however, want to limit 'individuality' and this is, after all, a *personal* statement. So, if you see a statement that doesn't follow the guidelines but ticks all of the boxes when you read it, and the student is happy, there is no need to change it to fit with this model.

It's important that we don't force our own versions of a personal statement on to the girls; it's a good idea to preface your suggestions with something along the lines of "These are only *my* thoughts and it's *your* decision about what you write ..."

Generally:

The entire personal statement must flow from beginning to end. It must give a real impression of someone eager to participate in the course to which they are applying and provide **evidence** of academic engagement, interest, skills, abilities, experience and personal character that supports their application. Each sentence should add something new about the person.

Opening Paragraph:

Ideally students should give the impression that they can see the 'bigger picture' in relation to their subject/course. They must demonstrate their knowledge and its relevance to the world at large.

Current Study:

If appropriate there could be mention of subjects being studied and how they link to the degree course/subject through identification of relevant skills, knowledge and abilities, giving succinct, detailed examples if possible.

Work Experience:

A paragraph about work experience should be written, again emphasising its relevance to the course and how it has helped to focus the individual student. (This may have come from deciding that a particular job wasn't for them!)

Extra-Curricular Activities:

Demonstrating roles and responsibilities (ideally identifying skills that relate to the study of their subject, either in terms of generic student skills or specific course skills); any achievements of which they are proud (e.g. raising money for charity, particular personal challenges they have overcome, specific goals they have achieved).

Final paragraph:

This must be focused on their subject and should add something, rather than simply summarising what has gone before. (e.g. How they will use their subject in the future, how they look forward to the study of the subject.) Don't forget, this is the last thing left ringing in the Admissions Tutor's ears!!

GUIDANCE FOR SIXTH FORM TUTORS - CHOOSING A COURSE

Choosing a Course

Decisions about courses tend to fall into three categories at this stage.

- Subject-based
- Career-based
- Unsure

Subject Based Decisions

These students know which subject they wish to pursue at university (or can narrow it down to a particular group of subjects, e.g. Sciences, Arts, Classics, Humanities, Languages, etc.), but may need help in finding the right degree course.

Students may not wish to make a career decision at this point, or may have something in mind that is a very broad idea, e.g. to go into 'something with French', or 'something using Chemistry'.

If your student is uncertain about their choice, please refer them to Mrs Ridley.

Career Based Decisions

These students are looking at following a particular career path. They may already know that they want a job in 'business', or 'working with animals', or 'in design'. They may know for sure that they want to be a 'forensic psychologist'.

Choices for these students need to be very carefully made. Whilst they may feel sure about their career goal at this stage, they may still be open to changing their mind at a later stage. Some courses are very much directed towards a particular career (e.g. BA (Hons) in Accountancy), whilst others narrow down the job group but keep career routes open through opportunities to study specialisms (e.g. BA (Hons) Business Management with an option to study Human Resources, or Marketing, or Public Relations).

It is claimed that up to 60% of graduate jobs do not require any specific degree, but nevertheless, if someone is studying a subject for 3/4 years, they want to be sure about their continued interest throughout this duration. They also want to be sure that the career they have in mind doesn't fall into the 40% of jobs that do require a specific degree.

If you have any concerns about your student's choice of course, please refer her to Mrs Ridley

Unsure

If, after exploring either of the above routes, students are still unsure about their ideas then they need to get some careers guidance prior to your being able to help them with their UCAS Applications. It may be better for a student to take a gap year prior to applying for entry to universities, or to defer entry, or to look at alternatives to higher education.

Please refer these students to Mrs Ridley

ADVICE TO OFFER THOSE DECIDING VIA SUBJECT INTEREST

Self-Exploration: Girls should explore their strengths and particular interests within their existing subject studies. They should also explore new subjects available at university, as well as options to combine subjects, before making their final decision.

Course Information: Girls should find out about courses on offer by reading through university prospectuses and departmental/course guides to begin to identify specific aspects of a subject/group of subjects that is particularly appealing.

Gaining Feedback: In their meetings with subject teachers, your tutee should look for honest feedback about their individual abilities in particular aspects of a subject and gain some insight into the subject specialisms that teachers studied at degree level.

Looking Ahead: Your tutees should be comfortable with the broad range of job opportunities that those who study this subject go into (and, more importantly, those types of jobs that they may be closing doors to.)

Tutor Check: Check that courses to which your tutee is applying **do not normally all make the same offer**, e.g. AAB. This leaves them without a feasible insurance offer. They must allow for a few grade spread. Using predicted grades from UCAS subject references, ensure that grades/tariff points for courses and universities to which the student is applying are achievable. Importantly, once students are at the stage of confirming Firm and Insurance offers, they must discuss this first with their Form Tutors to again ensure they include a range of grades.

ADVICE TO OFFER THOSE DECIDING VIA CAREER GOALS

How Sure? Your tutee needs to assess how sure she is about her decision. If she has a particular career in mind, is she aware of alternatives should this particular career prove difficult to get into, or if she changes her mind? If this alternative is in the same job-group as their original idea, then pursuing a career-based course may still be a viable choice. If, however, they are skipping between job options, e.g. "If I can't be a psychologist, I want to be a teacher" then their choices need to be considered further.

Reality Check: Sometimes your tutee may have got to this point without fully understanding the realities of a job, and how it might differ from the image that she has put together from various media inputs and perspectives gained from other people. Work experience can often be an extremely valuable opportunity to see the reality of a job. Using the summer holiday to undertake some work experience may prove invaluable for these tutees, and comes at a time when they can still use the information effectively to re-direct, or confirm, their choice of career.

Choosing Courses: Accreditation by a recognised professional body is often a determining factor in course choice (e.g. BPS, the British Psychological Society.) Particular features are contained in some courses (e.g. QTS for teaching.) Occupations and The Virgin Guide to Courses for Careers can help with this information.

Tutor Check: Check that the grades for entry to the course are achievable by your tutee. Confirm that this vocational degree is right for your tutee.