



Higher Education Handbook 2009

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INTRODUCTION

The next eighteen months are an exciting and important time for all members of year 12 and those who support them. During this time you will need to reflect seriously about what you want to be and how what you do will influence this.

You have many options. However, for most of you the discussion is going to be what sort of Higher Education in the UK is going to suit you. If you do not feel that this is right for you, do not feel pressured into taking a course that you are uncomfortable with.

We hope this booklet will help you to start asking appropriate questions, and thus come to a sound decision. It also provides the timetable of events for the next eighteen months for applications to Higher Education. It cannot cover every possible question you should be asking. The final decision must be yours. However, the school is also here to support you. The most important person in this process is your form tutor. Through academic tutorials and seeing you on a daily basis s/he has formed a relationship with you and is best placed to discuss your options with you. Subject staff are also available as are Ms Grant and Mr. Cheshire.

Whether you already have clear ideas as to what you want to do or whether you are confused and bewildered by the options, enjoy the process of exploration over the next few months and do ask for help when you so wish!

George Casley, Director Post 16 Education

IMPORTANT DATES

- 06 10 08 All of Year 12 have introductory session with speaker from LSE about university applications and life
- 20 10 08 All of Year 12 have introductory session on GAP years and volunteering from Worldwide Volunteering
- 10 11 08 All of Year 12 have talk from UEA concerning student finance
- November Start of Wednesday afternoon talks to encourage intellectual development.
- 14 01 09 Launch of programme to year 12 and their parents (the process and how to choose)
- February Visits to London universities in study skills sessions
Visits and talks from three GAP year providers after church, City Partnerships (19 01 09), Year in Industry (30 03 09), and Raleigh International (30 03 09).
- 16 and 17 02 09 Oxford and Cambridge Taster Day visits
- 18 03 09 We will also be hosting an evening for those considering a career in healthcare from 1800 until 1930 at our Blandford Street site. This will include many speakers and is essential for anyone considering any career in healthcare.
- 02 04 09 You may wish to attend the UCAS convention at National Hall, Olympia, Hammersmith Road, London W14 8UX between 0930 and 1430. (This is the first day of the Easter holidays.) Full details of this can be found on the UCAS website.
- 02 03 09 Interview Training Morning
- 08 06 09 Year 12 UCAS day (0830 – 1530). To include sessions from Birmingham and Imperial universities and sessions on Personal Statement writing and receiving Guideline Grades.

- 09 06 09 Visit to universities (Bristol, Bath and UWE) and compilation of list of possible subjects/universities and subject feedback.
Parents informed by letter of Guideline Grades for University Choice and informed of deadlines and that once completed the school has two working weeks turn around time before UCAS forms are sent off.
- 16 06 09 Cambridge Taster afternoon
HE evening 2 for students and parents (Resume of recent activities, Admissions Tutor, Finance)
- 01 07 09 Each member of staff who teaches a student to have drafted UCAS report (final version for staff who are leaving).
Deadline for draft personal statement to Mr. Cheshire for Oxbridge, Medicine and Law students and form tutor for the rest.
- 06 07 09 Second day of HEI visits (tbc)
- 14 07 09 Aptitude tests preparation days (tbc)
- 20 08 09 AS Results and final deadline for changing A2 subject
- 08 09 09 Personal Statement writing / A2 choice drop in clinic for those who want it with Mr Cheshire and Mr Casley.
- All students to be encouraged to complete forms as soon as possible for their own benefit, these are the latest dates for forms being submitted. School will process forms within two weeks of them being handed in complete and payment having been made online.
- 01 09 09 Deadline for applications for those applying for Choral Awards.
- 18 09 09 Deadline for Oxbridge, medicine and law UCAS and university forms to be completed and to Mr Cheshire.
- 25 09 09 Deadline for English, Drama, History and Psychology applications to form tutor.
- 02 10 09 Deadline for all other UCAS applications to form tutor.

WHAT IS HIGHER EDUCATION?

‘Higher Education’ usually refers to Universities, but also covers Colleges of Higher Education and specialist Colleges, leading to degrees, Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) or Diplomas of Higher Education.

The distinction between Universities and Polytechnics was abolished in 1992. This resulted in the introduction of a single application system (UCAS), through which you can apply to over 300 universities and colleges which vary greatly in character, location, size and competition for places. League tables are published which rank universities overall, and also by subject. You need to examine these carefully, and ask a lot of questions about how they are compiled. Points are earned for research, teaching quality, facilities and graduate employment. What is most important to you?

Many colleges and Institutes of Higher Education (e.g. St. Mary’s Twickenham, Leeds Trinity and King Alfred’s College, Winchester, Cumbria College of Art) have recently become universities and vary in size from 450 to 4500 students. They are usually on campus sites and might suit those who would be overwhelmed on a campus with over 10,000 students. Imperial College is now a university in its own right and has separated from London University.

There are also institutions to which you apply directly, for instance most music, dance and drama colleges, art foundation courses and so on (though even some of these use the UCAS system so you have to do your research carefully).

WHY GO ON TO HIGHER EDUCATION?

Before embarking on the long, complex and expensive higher education process, you need to examine your motives. These might be:

- You have a genuine passion for your subject, and you wish to spend a further three or four years studying it before making a career choice. Many people would consider intellectual curiosity the only good reason for reading for a degree.
- A degree is essential to enter your chosen career (e.g. teaching, engineering, medicine, architecture etc.)
- A good degree is still the best jumping-off point for the more stimulating and well paid careers.

Discuss your motives with your form tutor and parents. Try to find out about student life. Visit as many universities or colleges as you can (you should not just go on Open Days) and talk to current students. However, you are reminded that you should not miss more than three days of school to do this as missing more will seriously affect your learning.

If you are still unsure about applying, please discuss alternatives, such as direct employment or a Gap Year with your form tutor or Head of Year.

In general, higher education remains one of the best preparations for life. Hopefully you will improve your mind while having the opportunity to try new and exciting things and make new friends. Very few regret the time they spent at university or college.

CHOOSING AND APPLYING FOR YOUR COURSE

Background

Over 40% of graduate vacancies do not require a specific degree discipline - specialised on-the-job training is given. (So it is perfectly acceptable to start a degree course with no clear idea of a career at the end.)

A number of professions have total or almost total graduate entry (e.g. Accountancy, Law, Medicine, Paramedical areas and Psychology); many more have accelerated training and/or promotion schemes for graduate entrants.

Employers expect their graduate trainees to have gained a number of personal transferable skills during their education. In some cases, these skills are considered to be as important as the degree itself. The skills employers look for include:

- reasoning and problem-solving skills
- numeracy
- adaptability
- communication (oral and written)
- team work
- leadership qualities
- academic achievement and potential
- enthusiasm
- a wide range of interests (e.g. involvement in student societies)
- work experience (related, or unrelated, to the degree course or proposed career)
- ICT (Information and Communication Technology – i.e. Computing) skills.

Applying through UCAS

The UCAS form allows a maximum of five choices. Although most of you will use all five, it is acceptable to apply for fewer, although this is not usual. The maximum number of medical, dentistry and veterinary science applications is restricted to *four*. (This allows you to apply for an alternative course.) Admissions Tutors do not know what other courses you have applied for.

The dates for applications via UCAS are 1 September to 15 January; for applications including Oxford and Cambridge, medicine, dentistry and vet science the closing date is 15 October. However, *early application (before half term) is strongly advised for all candidates*, for a number of reasons:

- Admission tutors often deal with applications as soon as they are received and may call applicants for interview, and make offers, from mid-October onwards. Hence, the number of available places may well be diminishing from this time onwards.
- Admissions tutors will be able to spend less time on each application form during their busiest period from late November through to March.
- Over 35% of forms arrive in the two weeks before the deadline.
- Early application is especially important for the most popular courses.
- Medicine, Law, History and (probably) English candidates also need to register for subject specific tests.

You can use the UCAS website to access the prospectuses of all universities, or you can send for your own copies of prospectuses and departmental leaflets for the courses and institutions to which you are making an application. You will need these for your Personal Statement, and at any interview you will be expected to have studied these in detail.

Prospectuses for 2010 entry should arrive in March 2009 and a complete set will be available in the Year 12 study room on main site and in the work room in Blandford Street. Prospectuses will also be posted on university websites. You must check out exactly what the requirements are for any courses you are considering.

Competition for places on the most popular courses will be extremely fierce, particularly for English, Law, History, Drama, Medicine, Veterinary Science and Physiotherapy at the most popular universities. *Even having the typical predicted grades is no guarantee of an interview, let alone a place.* It is well worth finding out how many applications they receive for each place - this is a good guide to how competitive it is likely to be. Your form tutor and subject staff will help you to decide if your initial choices are realistic.

To apply we use 'Apply' an on-line UCAS application system. This allows you to work on your form anywhere that you have access to the Internet. You receive written instructions in June, and there is also excellent on-line help. On the form you will list your courses in UCAS code order, i.e. not in order of preference. Although universities will not know what other applications you have made, your Personal Statement still needs to demonstrate a commitment to a particular subject area, so avoid mixing courses that are quite unrelated.

Your Personal Statement covers your reasons for choosing the course, your career aims, relevant experience, interests, and overall must communicate your enthusiasm for the course. You will be given lots of support in writing this in June and will have to have completed a draft by the beginning of July. Enthusiasm for the chosen course is essential; you must demonstrate that you have researched the course thoroughly and understand what is involved. Relevant work experience, taster courses, background reading, membership of relevant societies, E.G. Medical Society for medics should all be highlighted. It is a one-side of A4 essay in which you need to argue why

you should be made an offer for the academic course for which you have applied. It is important that this statement is personal and analytic and reflects your personality. However, you might wish to consider the following points when writing it:

- Why do you consider the study of your chosen subject to be important?
- How do your current studies and extra-curricular activities support your application for a degree course in this subject?
- How do your wider interests and activities support your application for a degree course in this subject.

Whilst writing your personal statement you should remember that it will be read by an academic committed to the study of the subject. It should enthuse a love of learning!

Universities make offers which are dependent on gaining particular grades at A2. Most universities and departments give an indication of what grades these are likely to be. You should treat any grades given as the minimum offer likely to be made and ensure that you have chosen universities that make offers that match or are below the grades that you are predicted to gain at A2 level. Different courses will specify different requirements, e.g. a minimum of 340 UCAS points, to include 3 A2s and a fourth subject passed at AS level. The offer may well specify which subjects have to be included at A2 or AS level. It very possibly will just specify the A2 grades, and ignore the UCAS tariff altogether! UCAS points are as follows:

	<u>A2</u>	<u>AS</u>
A grade	120	60
B grade	100	50
C grade	80	40
D grade	60	30
E grade	40	20

You will submit your form to your form tutor who will add a reference, based on comments from your subject staff about your work in year 12 and your potential for success at A2. You will already have received your AS results and these will be recorded on the form (unless you have chosen to decline them), together with your GCSE results. Included in your reference are your form tutor's comments on reliability, punctuality, willingness to participate, commitment etc. as well as your suitability as a student and for the courses for which you are applying, and comments on your role in any extra curricular activities.

We cannot stress too strongly the need for you to submit applications as early as possible. From the point at which you submit your application, it takes up to two weeks to process as:

- All of the information that you give about yourself will be checked. If you have taken examinations out of school you will need to provide evidence of the result that you gained.
- Your tutor compiles a draft reference using material from all of your subject teachers and those running extra-curricular activities. This reference will also refer to your attendance and punctuality. All references written only state your strengths.
- This reference and your whole form are checked by Mr. Cheshire and Mr Casley before the form is sent.

After your UCAS application has been sent you may request a copy of your reference (for a fee) from UCAS. Alternatively you can ask Mr. Cheshire or Mr. Casley if you can read through a copy of it with either of them.

You may start to receive conditional offers within a few weeks of submitting your form, or it may be months. You can check the latest position on the UCAS website – 'Track'. You may be called for interview, but this is becoming less common. You are very likely to be invited back to visit the institution – at this point *they* are trying to persuade *you* to take up their offer.

By Easter of Year 13 you accept two of your offers - one as your 'firm' choice and the other as your 'insurance' choice, and you have to decline all your other offers.

In the unfortunate event of being rejected by all of your courses, you may make an 'Extra application', you do not have to wait until clearing. This could be very important if you initially apply for highly competitive courses. More details about this are on the UCAS website.

A Level results arrive mid-August and, if you have the grades asked for in your conditional offer, you are guaranteed a place. If you miss, help will be on hand within school to guide you. You are very strongly encouraged to be in school on results day so that any problems can be swiftly and easily sorted out.

A summary of the UCAS timetable is on pages 30 to 33.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

You are probably aware already that the whole process of making a higher education application is time consuming and potentially stressful! The secret is to start early – studying the mass of information available in the Careers Library, and on the Internet, visiting universities and talking to people with relevant experience. YOU are the one that will benefit from your research. The more research you put in, the more likely it is that your choices will be the right ones.

The key sources of information are as follows:

The Internet

The UCAS Website www.ucas.co.uk is now the key source of information. You can search by course or by university and there are links

to the university sites which contain a wealth of information. And once you have sent off your form, you can even check for the universities' decisions on the UCAS site (you have a password so the information is confidential to you only!)

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation> is the official government site and has links to lots of other providers of information. Be very wary of league tables – they only tell you what their compilers want you to believe.

www.universityadvice.co.uk Another comprehensive site on every aspect of going to university.

www.ukcoursefinder.com - Morrisby free Coursefinder

www.push.co.uk - PUSH – college guide written by students

www.timesonline.co.uk - The Times Good University Guide

Printed resources

The information in these excellent resources covers both courses and student life:

- The Times Good University Guide (Times Books)
- Brian Heap's Degree Course Offers (Trotman)
- Brian Heap's Choosing Your Degree Course and University (Trotman)
- Degree Course Guides in ten volumes (Hobsons)
- The Push Guide to Which University (The Stationery Office)
- What Uni or College? (On Course Publications)
- The Push Guide to Choosing a University (The Stationery Office)
- The Push Guide to Money – Student Survival (The Stationery Office)
- Making the Most of Being a Student (Kogan Page)
- Students' Money Matters (Trotman)
- The Virgin Alternative Guide to British Universities
- The Student Book (Trotman)

Look at these even if only to say ‘No, that’s not for me’:

- Experience Erasmus: the UK guide (ISCO)
- Opportunities in the Gap Year (ISCO)

These should all be available in your local library.

Careers Experience Courses and Conferences

These are an excellent way of finding out if a particular course, or career, is likely to be right for you. For example:

- **University of London** run an excellent series of taster courses, on everything from Japanese to Women in Computing. Not just for those intending to study there. Details available on 020 7862 8034 or www.lon.ac.uk/News_and_Events/Taster_Courses/home.asp
- **Workshop conferences** involve an overnight stay (many at Nottingham University) and cover a range of subjects. Lots of detailed information and guidance: www.workshop-uk.com
- **The Unilinx Conference Programme**
These are two day conferences held at university sites during June and July. There are 28 different subject areas plus a ‘no idea’ conference. www.unilinx.uk.com
- **Headstart** run an excellent range of science, engineering and technology experience courses: www.headstartcourses.org.uk
- **Medicine, Physiotherapy and Pharmacy** –information about one-off one day courses at
 - www.ontology.org.uk/PreMed.org
 - www.ontology.org.uk/PreTherapy.org
 - www.ontology.org.uk/PrePharmacy.org.

There is also a list of taster courses in the UCAS booklet ‘University and College Open Days 2009’ (available from the UCAS website).

All of year 12 can attend the UCAS convention in April.

TYPES OF COURSES

Single Honours Courses (e.g. 'Engineering') - one subject is studied through the course.

Joint Honours Courses (e.g. 'English *and* German') These courses are often quite hard work especially if the two subjects are not linked, and each 'half' may be more than 50% of the equivalent Single Honours course. You need to be able to work in an organised manner to keep the balance between the two subjects.

Major/Minor Courses also allow the study of two subjects, but with greater emphasis on the Major subject. The balance is usually $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$. Course titles will reflect this, e.g. 'Business Studies *with* French'.

For Joint Honours and Major/Minor courses in which the two subjects are linked, try to find out from the prospectuses if they are taught as totally separate entities or if areas of common ground are integrated. Beware of courses where the two departments clearly do not communicate at all! You should be able to find out more about this at Open Days and/or interviews.

Combined Courses are usually Faculty based, i.e. Arts, Sciences or Social Sciences, e.g. 'Combined Arts'. Combinations which include subjects from outside the Faculty are available at some institutions.

These courses offer the opportunity to study a number of subjects (usually three) in Year 1 before making decisions about a specialised subject or subjects for Years 2 and 3. Combined courses allow you to try new subjects without the commitment to a particular subject involved in a Single Honours course. The pattern or number of subjects and permissible combinations varies widely; it is important to check which subjects can be studied for one, two or three years and whether you must choose certain Year 1 courses to allow study of these or other courses in the following years.

Modular Courses are offered at an increasing number of institutions. Students will study a number of compulsory modules for their specialist degree subject(s), plus optional modules usually offered from a wide range of subjects. At the end of each module there will be an assessment (by examination, extended essay or other means) to earn a specific number of credits. Most institutions are moving towards greater modularisation of courses. As with Combined courses, specific Year 1 modules may be required for further study of a topic.

Sandwich Courses are four-year courses with 12 months spent on a work placement. This may be in one block during Year 3 or two, six month periods in the latter halves of Years 2 and 3 ('thick' or 'thin' sandwich courses). These courses are very common in Business Studies, Engineering and the Sciences. Projects undertaken in the work placement are devised jointly between the employer and your course tutor, marks awarded for these projects form part of the final degree mark.

Courses at Scottish Universities are *all* four years to Honours level. In most cases application is to a Faculty, not for a specific degree course (although you usually indicate your probable main subject on the application form). In Years 1 and 2 you usually study three subjects within the Faculty and then specialise in one or two subjects for Years 3 and 4. The system is similar to that of a Combined course at other Universities.

Modern Languages Courses also mostly last four years. Usually Year 3 is spent abroad, as a language assistant in a school, on an industrial work placement or studying at a university. At many universities you can take up a new language from scratch (such as Italian, Russian, Japanese or Chinese. Joint degrees that combine a language with another subject are becoming increasingly popular.

The ERASMUS Programme (European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) allows students to spend up to one year in an overseas university. The programme covers most subjects and details are published on university websites. Also look at *Experience Erasmus – The UK Guide 2006*. www.ukc.ac.uk/ERASMUS/erasmus. **Courses at American universities** are more general, more flexible, longer (four years) and initially less academically demanding than courses at British universities. Unless you have a scholarship, the cost can be between \$15K and \$45K per year – you are more likely to gain scholarships for your second and subsequent years. The application procedure takes at least 18 months and involves taking tests (SATS) and making individual applications to each university. Advice and information from the Fulbright Commission, based in Central London: www.fulbright.co.uk. The following are also available:

- *Undergraduate Study in the United States* - the Fulbright Commission
- *Getting into USA Universities* - Trotman
- *Peterson's Applying to Colleges and Universities in the US*.

Methods of Tuition and Examination should also influence your choice of course. Teaching and examination methods at university are very different from school. Which combination of methods would suit you best - are you a good examinee or are you better at working throughout a course?

- *Formal Lectures* - may be over 100 students
- *Seminars* - can be up to 12 students with a tutor
- *Tutorials/supervisions* - one or two students with a tutor

How will you be assessed for your final degree classification (First – 70% overall, Upper Second (2:1) – 60% or Lower Second (2.2)- 50%, ?

- *Examinations at the end of each year or semester* (all or some contributing to the final degree mark)
- *Examinations at the end of your final year only*
- *Extended essays/dissertations* to replace one or two examinations
- *Continuous assessment*

LOCATION AND FACILITIES

Remember you are choosing a place as well as a course, but do not let considerations of the place override the choice of the course which best suits you. Try to visit the institutions you are seriously considering - your impressions are important.

- *City/town:* Choosing an institution in a large city or town gives the opportunity of wider social activities such as concerts, theatre, clubs, etc. However, it can be more impersonal.
- *Campus:* A campus university has all or most of its facilities on one site. Does the campus offer the facilities that are important to you? How far is it from the nearest town?
- *Away from home, or not?* How far away? (consider traveling expenses) If close to London, do the students all go to London at the weekends? If in London, will you be eligible for University accommodation? See www.scit.wlv.ac.uk/ukinfo/uk.map.html for a map of UK institutions.
- *Expense of area:* Rents and accommodation charges (cities like Bristol are almost as expensive to live in as London). By and large, your cost of living will be lower in the North and Wales than in the South.
- *Accommodation:* Most universities offer guaranteed places for first year students in Halls or University-owned accommodation, some can accommodate students for two years (usually Years 1 and 3). What is the cost of accommodation? Is there a choice between catered and self catering?

See some of the following websites for more information:

- www.bunk.com – This covers most university and college owned Halls – what is provided, costs, transport and so on.
- www.unofficial_guides.com – Links to Student Union websites

- www.push.co.uk – Produced by students for students; highly recommended for a wide range of information
- *Libraries* - University and departmental: how convenient? opening hours?, how many places? Are there enough copies of essential books?
- *IT and telephone facilities* – Are there terminals in student rooms? Can you connect free to the university network? Where and how many PCs will be available to you? What are the printing costs? Who provides the telephone service to students' rooms? (Some universities force students to use expensive 0870 numbers!)
- *Languages* - Does the institution offer the opportunity for all students to keep up their language skills or to start a new language?
- *Sports* - Which? On site or not? Cost of using facilities?
- *Culture* - Theatre, music, art galleries, etc. on campus, student-run, in local towns?
- *Student newspaper/radio/television* - Especially important for those wishing to make a career in these areas.
- *Student support* – How do you rate the welfare system, study skills support, financial advice, counselling service, health facilities?

You can find much of this information in books like *The Push Guide to Which University* and *the Student Book*, all available in libraries. Many Students' Unions (or Guild of Students) publish an *Alternative Prospectus*, well worth getting hold of, for the inside view. Be persistent and don't fall for the hard sell – remember, universities are now businesses and want to recruit you!

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE

Candidates appropriate for Oxford or Cambridge would normally have an excellent GCSE record, be coping with relative ease at AS level and already be demonstrating a real enthusiasm and flair in their chosen subject. All candidates wishing to apply for a subject will be offered some specialised preparation during the spring and summer term of Year 12 and the autumn term of Year 13. This will be of particular relevance to Oxbridge candidates who will be expected to show initiative and determination to research areas of interest in their chosen subject by themselves. You may find it useful to consider the following points:

- (1) Oxbridge terms are only eight weeks long. The courses tend to be more traditional and the teaching is largely based on tutorials/supervisions in very small groups with much emphasis on independent study. The workload is intense and you need to produce written work on a weekly basis. You might be happier with a more vocational course or one which is a little less pressurised.
- (2) You will need to be strong in all A-Level subjects, and obviously outstanding in the subject(s) you wish to study demonstrating interest and commitment beyond the confines of the syllabus.
- (3) If you wish to study a non-school subject you must research it very carefully. You should appreciate that competition is extremely stiff as places for these subjects are limited by quota.

You apply to one College, or you may make an Open Application whereby you are allocated a suitable College by computer. See website for details. Do not disregard Women's Colleges. Most applicants are called for interview and may have to submit written work and/or complete a written test. Offers are made in late December and will usually be AAA.

APPLICATIONS TO ART FOUNDATION COURSES AND ART COLLEGES

Students wishing to pursue an interest or career in Art or Design should undertake an Art Foundation course before applying to university. These courses are challenging, exciting and stimulating and aim to qualify the student's intention and focus by the continuous study and exposure to a wide variety of creative disciplines, such as animation, graphic communication, photography or ceramics as well as the traditional disciplines. The application is submitted in December of the Year 13 course and students are required to prepare a substantial portfolio (20 A1 pieces) of wide ranging material, including sketchbooks and life drawings, by the end of January, for the first choice institution. There is considerable assistance with this process, including weekly classes led by Ms Manoochehri and students are given a mock interview as part of their preparation.

Typically, students from Marylebone have gone to Wimbledon, Camberwell, St. Martins or Byam Shaw Schools of Art although occasionally further a field, to Brighton or Falmouth for example. The foundation course carries a diploma award and students usually apply for university by the route 'B' method during their foundation year.

In exceptional circumstances, where students have an uncommon talent and a clear focus of subject a direct application to university is considered. Past applications have included submissions to The Slade School of Art (University College, London), The Ruskin School of Art (Oxford) and Southampton University. Here again an extensive portfolio is requested so the recommendation is that a route 'B' UCAS application is followed to enable time to prepare this. Some universities now operate four year degrees with a built in foundation element in the Fine Art discipline, such courses must also be applied for through UCAS.

APPLICATIONS TO DANCE COURSES AT PERFORMING ARTS COLLEGES

There are two routes you can take if you are interested in a **Dance** course in Higher Education. The first is the traditional vocational course run by Performing Arts or Dance colleges. These are designed very much to train you as a performer. This application process is not carried out through UCAS so you will need to order the prospectus and application form direct from the college. From your application you may be called for an audition. This audition would normally involve a class and/or a prepared audition solo. In some musical theatre courses you may also be asked to sing and act. If you make it through the class and get to perform your solo you will then be interviewed although you may not always get to this stage. You may also require you to undergo a thorough medical. Because of the popularity of such courses you need to apply to these types of colleges as early as possible. Spaces are first come first serve so if they fill them in the first audition (normally before Christmas of YR 13) then that's it ! Always go to an open day if possible and get a feel for the environment.

The second route you is by applying for a place on a university degree course. These types of courses often give a broader dance education and prepare you for a wider range of career opportunities including teaching. For these courses you will need to apply through UCAS in the normal way. You will then be called for an audition where you will be involved in a group class. It is rare that you will be asked to prepare a solo. You will also be interviewed. It is worth noting that there are many joint honours courses that you can take with dance and it is worth researching well before you apply. Many of the universities have excellent reputations for dance including Bath, Roehampton, Middlesex, Surrey and Bedford. Always go to an open day and check out their facilities before you make a decision.

For both types of courses you need to be prepared so try and start attending some technique classes at your local dance school. Go and see as much dance as you can in the theatre so that you have a good subject knowledge when it comes to interview. Any of the Dance Department staff can help you choreograph and rehearse prepared solo pieces and are available to help complete application forms and prepare for interview.

APPLICATIONS TO DRAMA COURSES AT PERFORMING ARTS COLLEGES

Students wishing to pursue an interest or career in Drama and Theatre Studies need to acknowledge the clear distinction between applying to a Drama school and a Drama degree.

The Conference of Drama Schools, (C.D.S.) guide to Professional Training in Drama and Technical Theatre is your first point of call. There is no easy route to success and attending drama school does not guarantee a job at the end of the course. Nor does it mean that you will never be out of work. However, if you have the drive and commitment to achieve your dream, then this is a good place to start.' Judi Dench.

The acting route: The audition process usually consists of a performance of a 2 minute monologues: classical or contemporary. Some schools have a workshop for applicants to gain and insight to the particular style of training. For actor training a course of three years involving voice, movement, characterization work in response to plays across theatre traditions leading to third productions and professional showcase.

The Technical Theatre/Stage Management Route: lighting, sound, set design and construction are the 'behind the scenes' profession that you can train in. In most case the training runs parallel with the acting course in creation of professional productions.

Drama degrees and joint Honour drama degrees with, for example, English focus on the academic theories and process that relate to drama as a 'text', as live performance, as a means of social intervention. The variety of drama degrees reflect the breath of the subject and you should align your choice of drama degree that is align to your particular passions. It is advantageous to develop a portfolio of theatre reviews, essays, scripts you have written, photographs of performance so have with you at interview. If this gets seen or note it is a point of reference in discussion at interview and the beginning of a professional catalogue.

APPLICATIONS TO STUDY MUSIC AT UNIVERSITY OR MUSIC COLLEGE

If you are interested in studying music after A-levels, your first decision is to choose between furthering your studies at either University or Music College.

Universities offering music cover a wide variety of courses and it is essential that time is spent researching specific websites and brochures to ensure you find courses that are of interest to you. Although there are some exceptions, music courses normally offer scholarly and practical education in Western musicianship preparing you for many avenues, including performance, composition, musicology including ethnomusicology and music journalism. Universities in some cities offer a joint course with a music conservatoire or college with a deeper focus on performance. Universities known to offer excellent courses in music are Manchester, Leeds, York, Edinburgh, Oxford, Cambridge, Kings, SOAS and Birmingham. Applications must take place through UCAS unless otherwise stated by the university.

If your interests are more focused on performing, composing or conducting, you may want to consider music college where the majority of time will be spent practicing and performing, both solos and as part of ensembles. Before applying to any course, you should consider the entry requirements. Most conservatoire courses have both academic and practical requirements and almost all courses will require you to demonstrate your skills at an audition or interview. The application process is much earlier for music colleges, sometimes as early as July at the end of your year 12 and many, although not all colleges have to be applied through the very informative website <http://www.cukas.ac.uk>.

EMPLOYMENT

If you are not contemplating Higher Education you still need to ask yourself some of the questions which have been raised earlier. You can gain more support through the connexions network. Please see Ms Grant if you wish to access this.

The following websites concerning jobs may be useful:

- www.connexions-direct.com
- www.agencycentral.co.uk
- www.alljobsuk.com
- www.gisajob.com

A GAP YEAR

A Gap Year offers opportunities to work, travel, meet new people, mature, develop self-understanding and, if necessary, re-think plans for higher education and consider whether HE is right for you. Many Admissions Tutors recognise the value of a Gap Year, feeling that students arrive as better directed and more mature who are going to work better, especially if

they have definite plans for spending the year constructively. Gap years should be seen as an opportunity for focused and exciting learning. They need rigorous planning, which should start at least eighteen months beforehand.

The choice is endless. You can go abroad with NGOs such as Raleigh International, GAP, Africa & Asia Venture, Teaching and Projects abroad, working on a huge variety of projects. In this country you can work with CSV (Community Service Volunteers), or join the Year in Industry project. Some companies, such as Deloitte, run very lucrative schemes and VSO have a brilliant 12 month scheme working in the UK and a developing country. You can organise work experience related to your chosen career, or work to earn money towards the costs of higher education. A very common way to spend the year is by working in the first half to earn the money to travel in the second half.

At present Mathematics departments are often reluctant to offer places to Gap Year candidates, and for some popular courses at very popular universities it might be harder to gain a deferred offer. After all, they are tying up a place without having seen most of the competition for that year. However, the stronger candidate you are, the more successful you are likely to be.

There are two ways to apply if you intend to take a Gap Year:

- You can apply for *deferred entry*. To do this, you proceed exactly as all the other students who are applying for 2009 entry, but you simply mark the 'Deferred Entry' box on the UCAS form. (You are strongly advised to first check with the Admissions Tutors how they are likely to respond to an application for deferred entry)
- You can also apply at the start of your Gap Year - this is known as a *Post Results Application*. You can still do this through school – you complete your UCAS form in the usual way and we will add your

reference. Clearly you need to be in this country long enough to organise this and be available for interviews/visits if invited by the institution. If you intend to apply post-A Level, please discuss this with your form tutor *before* you leave.

All students who wish to take a gap year are strongly advised to apply for a deferred place at university whilst they are still at school. The advantages of this are:

- you have a whole year for travel or voluntary work.
- you have the security of firm arrangements a year in advance.
- you have easier access to all of the support available in school.
- the offers made to you may stimulate you to work harder for your A-Levels.
- you are applying at the same time as your peers rather than going through the process in isolation.

A full list of “accredited” Gap Year organisations is available at www.yearoutgroup.org. For the latest information and advice about all aspects of Gap Years, visit www.gapyear.com.

There are many companies that make a lot of money “organizing” GAP year activities. You might be better advised (and much better off to organise your own. www.lonelyplanet.com is a good place to start.

Resources available from libraries include:

- *Opportunities in the Gap Year, ISCO Publication*
- *The Gap Year Guide Book, Peridot Press*
- *A Year Between: the complete guide to taking a year out, Central Bureau*
- *Mind the Gap*
- *A year off...a year on?*

FINANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education is an intellectual and financial investment. Funding arrangements change regularly and the best place to check is www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance. In January 2009 the figures for 2010 entry are not available. The information for 2009 entry is as follows:

For nearly all courses you need to pay fees, £3,225 a year and then you have to live (called maintenance in the literature!)

You may be entitled to a Maintenance Grant which is a non-repayable grant to help towards living costs. They are worth up to £2,906 a year:

- if your household income is up to £25,000 you could get a full grant
- if your household income is between £25,000 and around £50,000 you may qualify for a partial grant
- if your household income is over £50,000 you may not get a grant

Around two thirds of all new, full-time students are expected to qualify for a full or partial grant.

Student Loans are also available from the government to help with tuition fees and living costs.

From September 2009, it is expected that universities and colleges will be able to charge up to, a Student Loan for Tuition Fees (£3,225) is available to cover the full cost. You can then take out another loan for maintenance (to help with the costs of accommodation, food, books and other expenses).

You don't have to start paying back Student Loans from the government until you've left your course and are earning over £15,000. You then pay back 9 per cent of your income over £15,000 - so someone earning £18,000 would pay back £5.19 a week.

Where you live	How much you could get through the Student Loan for Maintenance
Studying in London and living away from your parents' home	Up to £6,928 a year
Studying outside London and living away from your parents' home	Up to £4,950 a year
Living at your parents' home (either in or outside London)	Up to £3,838 a year

Bursaries are available from universities and colleges. Bursaries are extra money which does not have to be repaid. The amount of support available varies depending on the institution, the course and your personal circumstances. But students who are paying the maximum tuition fees (expected to be £3,225 for 2009/2010) and receive the maximum Maintenance Grant (expected to be £2,906 for 2009/2010) will be entitled to a minimum bursary - likely to be around £319 for the year. Many institutions are offering much more than this, so check your chosen university and college prospectuses and websites to see what you could get. Help for specific groups of students. The school also has access to a few additional bursaries, which will be advertised to you in the spring of 2010.

The NHS also provides bursaries to cover tuition fees plus (means tested) maintenance grants for courses such as dental hygiene, nursing and midwifery, occupational therapy, orthoptics, physiotherapy, radiotherapy, chiropody, dietetics, speech and language therapy.

There is additional government, non-repayable help for students with children and adult dependants, and for students with a disability.

A limited number of academic, music or sports scholarships are available at some universities (especially in shortage subject areas such as physics). See www.scholarship_search.org.uk See also Brian Heap's University Scholarships and Awards (Trotman).

Sponsorship is a recruitment method for companies, allowing them to develop an early link with potential employees. Sponsored students are paid a bursary whilst attending university or college, in return for working for the sponsoring company. The student gains training and financial support while the company gains the possibility of a good employee. Bursaries are awards made to disadvantaged students, E.G. low family income, disabilities, personal circumstances.

Sponsorship allows students to form a link with a company, usually with no obligation either way to offer or accept a job at the end of the sponsorship period.

Most sponsorships are in Engineering, but some are available in the Sciences, Business Management or the Armed Forces. Some sponsoring companies require their students to work for them in the year prior to starting a University or College course. Useful guides to sponsorship available in the Careers Library:

- *Heap's University Scholarships and Awards* (Trotman)
- *Everything You Wanted to Know About Sponsorship and Graduate Opportunities (but were afraid to ask)* (Amoeba Publications)
- *Scholarships and Bursaries* (ISCO)

Do study the literature and see if sponsorship looks like a realistic option for you. But be warned – demand far outstrips supply. For more information concerning finance in general see:

- www.dfes.gov.uk/student_support
- *The Push Guide to Money: Student Survival* (Stationery office)
- *Students' Money Matters* (Trotman)

OPEN DAYS

Open Days are an opportunity for you to explore where you may be based for three or four years. They usually include a campus tour, information sessions and the opportunity to look at student accommodation. It is important to remember that universities view these occasions as key marketing opportunities, and you will certainly not receive an unbiased view! You need to use all your critical faculties and to ask lots of pertinent questions. You should also see the following:

- *University and College Open Days 2007 (UCAS)* for information about open days.
- www.opendays.com

You cannot attend the Open Day of every institution you might be interested in. Visits are useful and informative, but this must be weighed up against the disruption to your AS and A2 courses. It is perfectly possible to arrange a visit at another time – at a weekend, or even in the holidays. February half-term can be a particularly good time. You quickly get a feel of whether a place seems right for you. Once a university makes you an offer (in year 13), you are likely to be invited to a *further* Open Day where you can meet with subject staff and view the resources, accommodation and so on.

After you have been to the Open Day, it is time to reflect on what you have seen and heard. You need to think about the kind of people you have met. What sort of social mix is there? What are the social and sports facilities like? You need to think about the financial aspects - can you afford to live there? Above all, you need to ask yourself what appeals to you more about this institution than any of the others you have visited.

Remember that school policy is that students should not attend more than three Open Days each year during term-time as attending more will seriously affect your learning.

OUTLINE TIMETABLE FOR UCAS APPLICATIONS - Year 12

January – June

- Collect information about courses and institutions. The best source of information is the web and personal contact. N.B. Only visit universities during school holidays or at weekends.
- Create a scrap book of articles from newspapers and journals that are connected with your subject and attend pertinent lectures and talks.
- Discuss options with tutor and school staff.
- Prepare for and take AS examinations.

June – July

- Use the Guideline Grade for University Choice that you will be given for each subject to decide where you wish to apply for what courses. In most cases you should apply to five institutions which make a range of offers that match or are below your Guideline Grades for University Choice.
- Complete most of your UCAS form and draft your personal statement following three off timetable days of support.
- Start planning a GAP year if you intend taking one. If you are taking a GAP year you are very strongly advised to also complete a UCAS application for deferred entry.
- At this time your teachers will also be writing material that will form part of your reference.
- If you need to take BMAT, LNAT, UKCAT, LAT, HAT, EAT or any other aptitude test you need to start preparing for it. Help will be available in school.

July – August

- Read voraciously around your subject and develop a thorough understanding of the demands of university study. Keep records of your reading.
- Review your choices after AS results

OUTLINE TIMETABLE FOR UCAS APPLICATIONS - Year 13

September – October

- Following your AS results review your subject and institution choices and complete your UCAS application.
- Mock interviews with HE lecturers

November – April

- Receive decisions from universities and make your final choice of offer and insurance offer. You are not required to reply to any offers until you have received the last decision.
- Apply for student financial support from your local authority. You need to do this independently.

May – June

- A2 Examinations.

August

- Publication of A2 level results. You should be in school on results day and available for the two weeks after the results are published, as important decisions have to be made.
- Confirmation and Clearing procedures come into operation.

September – October

- Start university or GAP year activities
- If you wish to re-apply to universities following A2 results please contact Mr. Cheshire as soon as possible following your results

During the second part of the autumn term

- Return to school to collect your A-level certificates.

PAGE FOR NOTES



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