

Abbotsholme School



Sixth Form

Brief Guide

to

UCAS

and

Higher

Applications

Education

WHAT IS UCAS?

UCAS is The University and College Admission System. It is the only way to apply for higher education courses.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

In the Autumn Term of the Upper 6th form, students complete a UCAS application form, on line – although work can be carried out on the form from June in the summer term. It contains the following sections:

- Personal details (address, etc.)
- Education history – schools attended, GCSE and other examination results.
- Choices of university courses, up to a maximum of 6.
- A personal statement supporting the application
- A school reference, which will include forecast grades for A levels.

Following receipt of the application, universities will make offers (possibly after an interview) or reject the application. Applicants are able to accept two offers, a firm one and an 'insurance' offer. When results come out in August, the universities will confirm whether or not the offers have been met.

THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

This is the opportunity for the students to 'sell themselves' and convince admissions tutors that they are worthy of a place. It will include an explanation of: why they have applied for their chosen course; what experiences they have that are relevant to it; and what skills and experiences they have accumulated other than academic.

THE REFERENCE

This is written by the tutor after consultation with subject teachers, and then edited and approved by the Head of Sixth Form and Headmaster.

CONFIRMATION OF PLACES AND CLEARING

Once A level results are known, the universities will confirm whether or not their conditions have been met. They may sometimes confirm an offer even if the grades have been narrowly missed. If the conditions for the firm offer have been met, candidates are obliged to take up that offer. If the grades for the firm offer have not been met, then automatically the candidate is passed to the insurance university, who will then confirm whether their conditions have been met. If neither of the offers has been met, the candidate can enter 'clearing', a process that tries to match up universities which have vacancies to candidates who have not been placed. The onus falls on the applicant to contact universities directly to try and finalise a place.

CHOOSING A COURSE AND A UNIVERSITY

There are a multitude of courses and universities to choose between. The following factors should be borne in mind when choosing a course:

- **Which subject would I enjoy spending 3 or more years studying?** Students applying for courses that they have not studied before (e.g. Medicine, Philosophy, Law) would be well advised to research exactly what the subject involves. It is also recommended that they try to find some work experience that may or may not be linked to a subject they are interested in.
- **What A level grades am I likely to get?** Different universities have different entry requirements. Students should be realistic in their applications and try to apply to a range of different universities, to get a good spread of initial offers.
- **What subjects am I good at?**
- **Specific entry requirements of individual universities.** This might include particular subjects or grades at GCSE or A level.
- **What do I plan to do after university?** Obviously, choice of degree course will open or close certain career options. Students should give plenty of thought to their likely career, taking advice from the careers service at school and friends and relatives. They should refer back to their Morrisby reports and use other sources of information.
- **What is the university like?**
 - Geographical location (far or near from home?)
 - Style of university (campus or city?)
 - Structure of the course (flexibility, options for sandwich courses, method of assessment?)
 - Size and structure (large, small, collegiate?)

'OXBRIDGE' APPLICANTS

For candidates wishing to apply for Oxford and Cambridge universities, some further procedures are required. It is important that during the Lower 6th year a visit is made to the university. A separate application form has to be completed. Students wishing to apply for these universities should inform us of that as soon as possible.

MEDICINE, DENTISTRY, LAW, VETERINARY SCIENCE APPLICANTS

Candidates applying for these courses are required to take specific aptitude examinations. They should consult the UCAS website to see which apply to their chosen course and university, seeking advice from school where necessary.

UCAS TARIFFS

This is the points score system for entry into Higher Education. University admissions tutors may ask for either A level grades or UCAS points, calculated as follows:

AS levels: A = 60; B = 50; C = 40; D = 30; E = 20

A level: A* = 140; A = 120; B = 100; C = 80; D = 60; E = 40

Please note: AS points are only included if the pupil does not continue with the subject as a full A Level. Therefore, if a pupil has an A level in a subject the AS points are not added as an extra

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

The school would very much appreciate the help of parents in the following ways:

- Helping with selection of subjects and universities.
- Encouraging visits to universities, to open days.
- Helping to arrange any work experience or work placements that might help to build the appropriate CV.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The school library has a good range of publications on university courses, careers, etc.
- The UCAS Big Guide lists all university courses and their entry requirements.
- The UCAS website contains a wealth of information and links to other useful sites: www.ucas.co.uk . It has sections for students and parents. It also contains the Course Finder which provides course suggestions.
- University websites provide details about their own courses.
- www.aimhigher.ac.uk gives careers advice, information on courses, universities, etc.
- www.tqi.ac.uk gives information about the quality of HE courses, as assessed by official inspectors.
- www.opendays.com lists HE open days
- www.hero.ac.uk is an independent website that gives at-a-glance profiles of all UK universities.
- www.direct.gov.uk/studenttfinance gives information about applying for student loans and grants, which should be done from April onwards in the year the student is to start their course.

CALENDAR

The outline calendar for the process of applying for a university course and the help provided by school and parents is as follows:

LOWER 6TH

Spring 1	Leicester University talk (Alexandra Casasnovas), January 2012 Introduction to HE talk (Nathalie Mortimer, Nottingham University), February 2012 Researching HE courses and library resources(Head of Year), February 2012 ISCO careers interview 8th February
Spring 2	Various talks regarding University life
Easter	Open day visits
Summer 1	Review of action plans Open day visits Letter to parents about University application process Begin draft of personal Statement
Summer 2	Create UCAS account and begin completion of the application form Talk on personal statements and on understanding the electronic applications system Completion of draft personal statements Open day visits
Summer Holiday	Open days Taster courses Work experience Final discussion with parents about applications Registration for aptitude tests (Medicine, Law, etc.)

UPPER 6TH

Autumn 1	Supervised completion of parts of the application form BMAT/UKCAT or other aptitude examinations for Medicine and other applicants Assistance for Oxbridge/medical/dental/veterinary applications (Deadline: 15 th October)
Autumn 2	Mock interviews for Oxbridge/medical candidates and others
Christmas	
Spring 1	15 th January: Final UCAS deadline Interview advice for rest of year. Interviews, visits, 'compulsory' open days.
Spring 2	Student Finance Talk (Lucy Ingham) Individual advice over choices of final 2 universities. Parents make financial arrangements – application for loans, etc.
Easter	
Summer 1	Student life talk (Lucy Ingham) Most decisions made
Summer 2	
Summer Holiday	Results day – guidance on clearing.