



Year 12 Information Evening

Higher Education, Apprenticeships and The Future

The Robert Carré Trust

Welcome to our Parent Information Evening. We hope you will find this information pack helpful to supplement the information we will give you this evening.

Contents:

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2. Useful links
3. FAQs

Programme for the Evening:

1. Higher Education
2. Apprenticeships and Employment
3. Student Finance
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Parent Guide to University Applications

This brief guide is designed to give you an overview of the process for applying to university. It supplements information given directly to students.

How do you apply to university?

Applications to Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) are usually made through an organisation called **UCAS** (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service). Students fill out an online application form using the 'Apply' section of the UCAS website, which includes personal details, examinations they have taken and a 'Personal Statement' of up to 4,000 characters (about a side of A4) to explain why they want to apply for a particular course and the skills and qualifications they have to support their application.

How many can you apply to? How much does it cost?

Students can choose up to 5 courses (usually the same/similar course at 5 different universities, but this could be different courses at the same university). For 2026 applications, the fee will be £28.95 (unless a student is eligible for Free School Meals, in which case it costs nothing and school verify they are eligible, or have been in the last 6 years). For students applying to Conservatoires the fees are also £28.95.

How do you choose a course?

There are thousands of courses available at hundreds of universities and colleges. Students need to make sure they choose their courses for the right reasons and do plenty of research before deciding where to go. The 'Course Search' part of the UCAS website is a good place to start. After that individual institution websites should be studied as degrees vary hugely from place to place - both in terms of content, course structure, examination schedule and teaching style. There are many joint courses; some courses have a 'sandwich' year in industry; others offer the opportunity to go abroad for a year; some are Master's Degrees.

Key questions for students to keep in mind are:

- Which subjects interest me?
- What are my talents?
- What job would I like to do after university or college?
- Which academic skills would I like to improve?

How do students choose a university or college?

There are many factors to consider. Whether or not the institution does the course you want should be the first consideration, looking particularly at the modules studied. After that, the reputation for that subject, the percentage of satisfied students or graduate employment records, cost of fees and distance from home are all important. Another important factor is the accommodation on offer - whether on a campus or a city site, rural or urban together with a 'feel' for the place. A useful website to help students choose is <https://www.theuniguide.co.uk> or you might be interested to look at university league tables e.g. in The Times or reviews from the National Student Survey. We also encourage students and parents to attend Open Days; we suggest a maximum of 3 days in school time, and many are now at weekends. SJSF is also organising a trip to 2 universities on 27th June. There may be virtual open days, and UCAS offer a 'chat to students at uni' section on their website, which may also give some insights.

What grades do you need?

The 'UCAS Tariff' is the system for allocating points to qualifications used for entry to higher education. Universities and colleges use the UCAS Tariff to make comparisons between applicants with different qualifications. Tariff points or grades are often used in entry requirements, although other factors are often taken into account. Many of the top universities now require ABB grades, or 128 points. The table below shows the tariff:

Extended Project Qualification	AS level	A level	Tariff points	BTEC Extended Diploma (Triple Award)	BTEC or CTEC Diploma (Double Award)	BTEC Subsidiary Diploma or CTEC Extended Certificate or CTEC Introductory Diploma (Single award)	BTEC Certificate (1 year award)
			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			D*	
		A	48	PPP	MP	D	
		B	40				
		C	32		PP	M	
A*			28				D*
A		D	24				D
B	A		20				
C	B	E	16			P	M
D	C		12				
	D		10				
E			8				P
	E		6				

D = Distinction Star, D=Distinction, M=Merit, P=Pass*

Examples:

- You get BBC in 3 A-levels. This would equal 40+40+32 = 112 points.
- You get Distinction (D) in a BTEC and AB in 2 A-levels. This would equal 48+48+40 = 136 points.

Sometimes universities specify a particular grade as part of a points offer (e.g. "120 points to include a B in Chemistry"). Some universities may accept EPQ as part of an offer.

It is advisable to apply for courses with a range of tariffs with reference to a student's predicted grades. Predicted grades will be given to students by their teachers in September 2025.

The 'Entry Profile' gives more information about the qualifications and experience needed to apply for a particular course. Many require English and Maths GCSE at grade 4 or above, and particular A-levels e.g. Chemistry for a Medicine degree. Some teaching courses require a minimum of 10 days school experience.

Some courses also require specific **admissions tests**. Medicine, for example, at most universities requires taking the UCAT; some institutions ask for the LNAT test for Law, and applications to Oxbridge may require further tests. Students must register (and pay if applicable) for these themselves and sit them at a driving test centre.

When to apply?

Students can start applying for courses starting in 2026 from 3rd September 2025. The 'equal consideration' deadline for most courses is 14th January 2026, however for Music applications to Conservatoires it is 2nd October 2025, and the deadline for Oxbridge, Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Veterinary Science and Dentistry is 15th October 2025.

In school, we encourage students to register with UCAS in June/July of Year 12 in order to start completing the application form and begin drafting a personal statement, especially if they will be applying by 15th October. Students can still apply after 14th January 2026, but universities will only look at applicants if they still have places left. Obviously it is better to apply earlier rather than later, as most universities start giving out offers as soon as they receive applications.

Who writes students' references?

The form tutor writes the reference, but we ask for detailed contributions from specific subject teachers to help with this. For example, a student applying for History will have detailed information supplied by the History department which will be incorporated into a more general reference; tutors use information about their tutees' extra-curricular activities and the knowledge they have acquired about individual students over their time in Year 12. All students are encouraged to share their skills and competencies with their tutor using 'Unifrog', our Careers and university platform. References are then checked and amended if necessary, by the Head of Sixth Form.

What support does school give applicants?

We usually give talks about the UCAS process to introduce students to the application procedure but then arrange various talks from universities - on how to choose a course, write a good personal statement, student life etc. We often have ex-students come back to talk about their experiences too. We produce a guidance booklet for students and plenty of help is available on the UCAS website. We encourage students to seek advice from subject teachers and their form tutor when drafting (and re-drafting) the personal statement. Each student then has an appointment with the Head of Sixth Form to go through their application, including the personal statement and reference. We also offer specialist support for the very competitive Oxbridge and Medicine courses, and every student has the opportunity to have a mock interview if it is likely they will need one.

What happens once the applications are received by UCAS?

Students will begin to get offers from universities shortly after applying, many without an interview. Some courses or institutions are likely to require an interview, e.g. health care related, Oxbridge applications, teaching courses etc. Offers are generally received by the end of March, but it can be as late as May, and students then have a personal deadline by which to choose a 'firm' offer (1st choice) and an 'insurance' offer (2nd choice). Usually these will be conditional on achieving specific grades or tariff points, although sometimes universities do give out unconditional offers. Students choose which offers to accept via the UCAS website, usually by early June. If they are rejected by all 5 institutions or they change their minds, students can apply through UCAS 'Extra' which allows them to apply for one course at a time according to where there are still vacancies (listed on the UCAS website from late February).

What does it cost to go to university?

The fee cap for full-time courses in 2025-26 is £9,535 per year, with living costs on top. It is expensive. However, the ONS surveys suggests that over a lifetime, a graduate can earn on average £480,000 more than a non-graduate. Tuition fees are covered by a student loan, which is paid back over 40 years once a graduate starts earning more than the repayment threshold - currently at least £26,000 a year. It is effectively a graduate tax as the money is taken at source, along with tax and national insurance, and the amount repaid each month varies according to the amount earned. Whatever debt has not been repaid after 40 years is written off. Graduates pay 9% of their income above the repayment threshold.

Maintenance loans are also available for living costs. The maximum amounts vary depending on where the student studies e.g. up to £8,887 if at home or up to £13,762 if in London. They are means tested so the precise amount a student is eligible for is calculated on a sliding scale, with students from lower-income households being eligible for more. The implication here is that students from better-off households will be supported to some extent by their parents.

For more information and to apply (when the time comes) visit Student Finance England www.gov.uk/studentfinance. UCAS also has a lot of guidance: <https://www.ucas.com/student-finance-england/living-costs-full-time-students>

What happens if students don't get the required grades/points?

It is vitally important that students are available on A-level results day (usually mid-August) in case they don't achieve the grades needed for their course. In many cases, if a single grade is dropped, they may still be accepted but it depends on each individual HEI's criteria as well as on the performance of other applicants. If a grade is missed by a few marks it might be worth getting an exam paper reviewed. If students have not met the tariff for either their firm or their insurance offer then they can enter 'Clearing' – a process where students look for vacancies in the national press or online and then phone HEIs direct to see if they are able to accept them. They may be required to attend an interview at this stage. If no offer is made, then school will support them in re-applying the following year should they wish to.

Further information

UCAS has an excellent **website** with a dedicated Parents' Section. You can download and read through their extensive guidance and sign up for regular newsletters or tweets at: <https://www.ucas.com/discover/advice-for-parents-guardians-and-carers/parent-guardian-and-carer-guide>

In the meantime, if you have any other questions, please do get in touch and we will endeavour to answer your query.

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Higher Education, Apprenticeships & The Future: Useful Links

Students are strongly encouraged to cast a wide net and to explore all the options available to them before they commit to a Post-18 pathway. In many cases, our students apply for university but also seek out apprenticeship options in the same area. Some of our students are adamant that one route is their only pathway and they then dedicate their effort to completing their university or apprenticeship application. Students wishing to enter the workplace are encouraged to follow the 'apprenticeship pathway'. They should complete their CV and covering letter and request a reference and support from their tutor. Additional help with CVs and cover letters can be found on the Unifrog website. www.unifrog.org

Apprenticeship Applicants

- UCAS website: ucas.com/understanding-apprenticeships
- Find an apprenticeship (GOV.UK): <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>
- How apprenticeships work (GOV.UK): <https://www.gov.uk/become-apprentice>
- Higher and degree level apprenticeships guide: <http://university.which.co.uk/teachers/introduce-higher-education-options/higher-and-degree-apprenticeships-guide-download>
- NGTU support: <https://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/>
- The Network Lincoln: <https://www.networklincoln.co.uk/>
- GetMyFirstJob www.getmyfirstjob.co.uk

University Applicants deadline (14 January 2026)

- Applying to UCAS (from June): ucas.com/apply
- Parent help guide: www.ucas.com/parents
- HEAP 2026 guide and Times University Guide (Sixth Form Work Room CGS - Careers Library KSHS)
- Student planner (pages 131-155)
- Guardian university guide: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide>
- Complete university guide: <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/>
- The uni guide: <https://university.which.co.uk/>
- UCAS (chat to university students): <https://www.ucas.com/explore/search/unibuddy?query=>
- UCAS hub lives and Facebook lives: <https://www.ucas.com/applying/you-apply/what-and-where-study/university-events-and-open-days/hub-live-sessions>
- What graduates earn: <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/careers/what-do-graduates-do-and-earn/>
- How employable are graduates: <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/747999993/>
- Student finance step-by-step guide (GOV.UK): <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltime-students>
- Student loans myth busting: <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-england-plan-5/>
- Student Finance England: <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance-register-login>

University Admissions Tests

All admissions tests are now sat at Pearson VUE test centres and are online.

UCAT: the Universities Clinical Aptitude Test is needed for **most Medicine and Dentistry courses**. Registration is open from 17th June 2025 and closes on 19th September; the test must be taken between 7th July 2025 and 26th September 2025. Information to support your understanding of the UCAT including past papers is accessible at: <https://www.ucat.ac.uk/>

To book your test <https://www.ucat.ac.uk/register/booking-your-test/>

The cost of the test is £70; they do have bursary options.

Universities use UCAT in different ways, so make sure you understand how they use the scores **before you apply to universities**: <https://www.medify.co.uk/blog/medical-schools-ucat-requirements>

LNAT: some Law courses require students to sit the LNAT (including Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Glasgow, Kings College London, LSE, Oxford, SOAS, UCL). Registration is online and all details are accessible on the LNAT website at: <https://lnat.ac.uk/>

The cost of the test is £75 and the opening date to register is 1st August 2025.

Different universities have different deadlines for sitting the LNAT (not yet published, but likely to be):

- Oxford and Cambridge applicants: by 15th September
- Applicants to King's College London, University College London and the London School of Economics: by 31st December
- All other applicants: by 14th January

LNAT test results cannot be carried over from one year to another, therefore tests should not be taken over the summer holidays. The first tests for 2026 entry can be taken from 1st September 2025.

TARA: the Test of Academic Reasoning for Admissions is a new admissions test that UCL are using for some of their courses for 2026 entry. These courses will require it: Computer Science (BSc/MEng), European Social and Political Studies (BA), European Social and Political Studies: Dual Degree (BA), International Social and Political Studies (BA), Mathematical Computation (MEng), Management Science (BSc), Robotics and Artificial Intelligence MEng, Social Sciences (BSc), Social Sciences with Data Science (BSc), Sociology (BSc).

The cost is £75, the tests can be taken 15-16th October 2025 and 12-13th January 2026. Registration should be between 31st July and 29th September 2025 for the Autumn sitting and between 27th October and 19th December for the January sitting.

More information and sample tests can be found here:

<https://www.pearsonvue.com/us/en/uatuk.html>

Oxford Admissions Tests <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/guide/admissions-tests>

All admissions tests (except LNAT and UCAT above) will take place between 21-31 October and are as follows:

- **Ancient History and Classical Archaeology Admissions Test (AHCAAT)**
- **Biomedical Sciences Admissions Test (BMSAT)**

- **Classics Admissions Test (CAT)**
- **Mathematics Admissions Test (MAT)**
- **Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT)**
- **Philosophy Test (PhilAT)**
- **Physics Admissions test for Physics, Engineering and Materials Science (PAT)**
- **Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA)**

Candidates for all of the above Oxford tests will be able to register themselves free of charge with Pearson VUE, usually between 15 August and 4 October. When registering, candidates will be able to request the access arrangements which are normally available to them for public examinations taken in their schools and colleges.

Cambridge and Imperial College London Admissions Tests

The **Engineering and Science Admissions Test (ESAT)** will be used for degree programmes in Engineering, Natural Sciences, Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology, and Veterinary Medicine at Cambridge, and Physics and most Engineering degrees at Imperial.

The **Test of Mathematics for University Admission (TMUA)** will be used for Economics and Computer Science degrees at Cambridge, and both the Economics, Finance and Data Science and Computing degrees at Imperial. A number of other UK universities will also use the TMUA for assessing applications for mathematically-based courses: **LSE, Warwick and Durham**.

LNAT and **UCAT** are also required for Law and Medicine courses (see above).

Applicants will be required to pay an administration charge (£75) to take the tests, in line with other comparable institutions, but a fee waiver will be applied for UK-based applicants who are eligible for free school meals or who meet a number of other widening participation criteria. Bursaries are also available.

The TMUA and ESAT will run test-sittings 9-10 October 2025 and 6-7 January 2026. Applicants to Cambridge must take the Autumn sitting. Registration should be between 31st July and 29th September 2025 for the Autumn sitting and between 27th October and 19th December for the January sitting.

College Admissions Tests

Many other Cambridge courses have their own admissions tests, but it can depend on which college you apply to. You do not need to register for these in advance as you will only sit them if you are short-listed for interview. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/apply/after/college-assessments>

Post-18 Applications: Frequently Asked Questions

Part 1: UCAS Applications

- **How do I ensure I get offered a place at university?**
 - Ensure your UCAS form is completed accurately and don't leave your personal statement until the last minute. Most importantly, apply for appropriate courses relative to the entry requirements so that you can realistically achieve the grades. Having a range of course choices with one aspirational and 1-2 'back up' options with lower entry requirements relative to recent tracking grades is strongly recommended.

- **What are the UCAS application deadlines?**
 - 15 October for Dentistry, Medicine, Veterinary Science and Veterinary Medicine and for all courses at the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge.
 - 14 January is the equal consideration deadline for all other courses.
 - 30 June is the final deadline. All applications received by this date are processed and sent to the universities and colleges.
 - Applications sent after 30 June will not be sent to the universities and colleges in the usual way. Instead, you will be automatically entered into clearing.

- **What help is available to students with a disability?**
 - Financially, the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) may be able to support your application as a direct result of your disability or specific learning difficulty. How much you get depends on your income or that of your household. Unlike student loans, this assistance does not have to be repaid. More information on this is accessible on the UCAS website and at: [Disabled UCAS Students | Studential.com](#)

- **Can I send off a second application?**
 - No – only one application per cycle. If you've sent fewer than 5 choices off, you can add additional courses through Track before 30 June. UCAS Extra is also available to student who receive no offers or decline all offers.

- **Can I reapply if I already have a deferred place?**
 - No – if you decide you no longer wish to study the choice that you had accepted, they you'll need to speak with the university. If they agree to let you withdraw your application, and you had applied for the course in the previous application cycle, you may submit a new application.

- **Can I apply to both Cambridge and Oxford Universities?**
 - No – you may only apply for one. Remember that the deadline for applications is earlier (15 October).

- **How do I start using UCAS Apply?**
 - Go to the UCAS website to access the Apply system, clicking Register/Log in to Apply to get started. You don't need to complete it all at once - it's important that you complete it thoroughly and accurately.

- **How do I apply through/via my school?**
 - You will need to use the school Buzzword to link your application to the school. This means that your tutor can track your application and will have access to add your reference. The school will then be able to submit it to UCAS once it's completed.

- **How do I pay?**
 - Students will have a Pay and Send option once their form is completed. Students will need to pay via a debit or credit card. Completing the Pay and Send function sends the form to the Sixth Form Team to be checked and processed, before the form is sent to UCAS. Students who are eligible for Free School Meals pay no fee and students who receive the 16-19 Bursary will be eligible for support.

- **Can I send my form directly to UCAS?**
 - No – as the form is being registered through the school, your application will be sent to us so that a reference can be attached. Once the reference is attached a member of the Sixth Form Team can send the completed application to UCAS.

- **Can I apply to more than one course at a particular university?**
 - Yes – the only exceptions are for Oxford and Cambridge where you can only apply to one of the universities and for only one course. The only drawback to applying for different courses (e.g. Business and Sport courses) at the same university is that your personal statement may not be able to showcase your preparation for both courses.

- **How many universities can I apply to?**
 - You can apply to a maximum of five courses, although there are some restrictions:
 - Four courses if applying for Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine or Veterinary Science.
 - One course at either Oxford or Cambridge.
 - You can use your remaining choice(s) for any other subject. For example, if you have made four choices for Medicine, your fifth choice could be for Pharmaceutical Chemistry or Biomedical Genetics, for example.

- **Who will write my reference?**
 - Your form tutor will write your reference. If you have two tutors, they will discuss your reference and one tutor will lead on the writing of it. It is vital that you complete the Tutor Reference Form and/or notes for referees on Unifrog as early as possible, as this will let your tutor have more information about how you've prepared for your course and your extra-curricular activities.

- **How do I write my personal statement?**
 - The personal statement is in 3 sections and must be no longer than than 4000 characters. The personal statement demonstrates to admissions tutors why you've chosen to study the course in a clear and concise manner. We recommend you complete at least 3-4 drafts and seek feedback from your form tutor and a subject specialist (one of your teachers). Most importantly, don't leave this until the last minute. Unifrog is a great starting point!

- **What happens once I've sent off my UCAS form?**
 - UCAS will process your form and they will be in touch if they need to query anything. The UCAS form will be sent to your chosen universities, and you will receive a welcome email from UCAS directing you to Track (where you

can track any offers that are received). The universities will not know which one is your preference or where else you've applied to.

- If you don't receive a welcome email within 14 days, you should contact UCAS customer services.

- **Am I likely to get an interview?**
 - An interview is likely for a number of courses at Russell Group universities, including Oxbridge. The same applies for competitive courses such as Medicine and Law. Some other subjects also have a reputation for interviewing, such as Teaching and Art and Design.
- **What do I do if I've not received any offers, or I change my mind?**
 - UCAS Extra opens after 26 February. You can add one extra choice for consideration via Track. If you're unsuccessful again, you can repeat the process.
 - If you're unsuccessful or have changed your mind about what to study, you should ring the admissions office at the university you intend to apply to see if there are places available. Once you've done this, rewrite your personal statement to ensure it is specific to the new course. The university will request this and will be awaiting your application, increasing your chances of getting an offer.

Part 2: Apprenticeship Applications

- **How long does an apprenticeship take to complete?**
 - An apprenticeship takes a minimum of 12 months to a maximum of 5 years depending on the level of apprenticeship and the industry/sector you're applying to. Generally:
 - Level 2 takes 12-18 months
 - Level 3 takes 24 months
 - Level 4 and higher takes up to 5 years
- **Would I be an employee during my apprenticeship?**
 - Yes – an apprentice has the same employment rights as any other member of staff. The only difference is that you will have a contractual end date to your employment/training programme.
- **How much will I be paid as an apprentice?**
 - Apprentices get paid £7.55 per hour aged under 18, or aged 19+ and in the first year.
 - Once they are over 19 and have completed the first year, they are entitled to the national minimum wage or national living wage.

The rates change on 1 April every year.

From April 2025, the National Minimum Wage rates are:

- £12.21 (aged 21 and over)
- £10 (aged 18 to 20)
- £7.55 (aged under 18)
- £7.55 (apprentice rate)

Data taken from <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>

- **Will I receive holidays when doing an apprenticeship?**
 - In short, yes. You will receive at least 20 days paid holiday per year plus national/public holidays.

- **Is there a minimum number of hours I must work?**
 - As an apprentice, you should be required to work a 30-hour minimum week and no more than 40 hours. Usually, four days is spent with the employer per week with the fifth day at college.

- **Can I get a degree from doing an apprenticeship?**
 - Yes – most apprenticeships will enable you to gain an NVQ, HNC or HND but higher apprenticeships give you the opportunity to train and study for a foundation degree or an honours degree. During your degree apprenticeship, you will be required to study part-time with a university.

- **Is there a permanent position available at the end of my apprenticeship?**
 - In many cases, the answer is yes. 85-91% of apprentices remain in employment and 64% of these continue to work with the same employer.

- **Who pays for my degree in a degree-level apprenticeship?**
 - The employer will pay. The employer will be very thorough in selecting the 'right' person for these apprenticeships, as they are hugely investing into you. You will be expected to work hard while learning on the job and perform well academically at the same time with your university work.

- **When do I apply for an apprenticeship?**
 - Apprenticeships are advertised when the company chooses. Many companies advertise on the GOV.UK website and national search engines, while others choose to solely advertise on their own websites. Unlike with a UCAS application where deadlines are set for all applicants, students applying for an apprenticeship must be self-motivated and proactive in seeking out and applying for an apprenticeship. Students should prepare their CV and cover letter in advance, request their reference from their tutor and then seek additional support and guidance from their form tutor during the application process.