

Your guide to University

For more help or support, don't forget to:

- Speak to your Senior Tutor, Careers Advisers, subject teachers, parents/ guardians and the universities themselves.
- Make a careers appointment or to get further advice email careers@asfc.ac.uk. For more information about the type of advice and support available check the 'Careers' section on the College Community page of Canvas.
- Look up university websites. Many are holding a number of talks and information sessions online that allow you to ask any questions that you may have.

**Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine,
Dentistry & Veterinary
Applications**

**Internal College Deadline
25th September 2020**

**Ucas Deadline
15th October 2020**

**All Other University
Applications**

**Internal College Deadline
21st October 2020**

**Ucas Deadline
15th January 2021**



Things to Consider



Choosing a subject

Finding the right subject to study at university is one of the most important decisions you will make. Look for a subject you will enjoy but also a subject you can succeed at and can get you where you want to go in terms of careers/interests.

- You could start by looking at degree subjects linked to your college courses. Take a look at the subject guides on **UCAS** and search for degrees linked to your college subject using **Unifrog**.
- You could also look for degree subjects linked to your interests, for example, you may be interested in politics or films, live music or architecture, fixing things or helping people. Try the interest quiz on **Unifrog**.
- Some students will choose a degree linked to a particular career for example surveying, radiography, interior design, physiotherapy. Try the **UCAS Buzz Quiz** or the **Prospects Career Planner** or **Job Match** to explore what career might suit you and look at the **Unifrog Careers Library** and **Prospects Job profiles** for careers information.

Student Finance

Student Finance is there to help you to pay for your time at university. It is split into two parts:

- **Tuition fee loans** are paid directly to your university and cover the full cost of your degree
- **Maintenance loans** are paid directly to you in three instalments through the year and can be used to pay for accommodation, transport, living and study costs. It is important that you budget this money and you may need to supplement it with additional income from part time jobs or from family. The amount you are eligible for is dependant on where you live, study and your household income

Open Days

- It is important to get a sense of where you might be studying. Attending an Open Day (whether virtually or in person) is a good way to find out if you like the place. You'll also have an opportunity to see facilities and meet with course lecturers and current students.
- **Open Days.com** is a good place to find university events and open days as well as checking the list on **UCAS**.

- There may be degree subjects that will be completely new to you, for example, food science or history of art – explore different university websites to see what is out there and use the UCAS course search to see which universities offer which degree subjects.

Once you have started to explore degree subjects or groups of subjects it is vital that you do a 'deep dive' into what degree subjects actually involve. What are the core/compulsory modules and what are the optional modules? What are the entry requirements? How will you be assessed? Does the degree involve placements? What careers do graduates do? Is the degree accredited by a professional body?

You wouldn't book a holiday without doing your research – make sure you know what a degree subject involves. If you need further help with your research, have a look through our **Guide to Researching your options**.

- **Loan repayments** do not start until you have graduated and begin to earn above a specific annual salary (the current threshold is around £26,500, but this figure changes annually). Repayment amounts are linked to the amount that you earn and not the amount that you have borrowed. If you earn below the threshold or you are not in paid employment, you do not pay anything.

- Official information about student finance can be found at the **StudentRoom** or **Gov.uk**

- There is also useful information for you and your parents / guardians at **money saving expert** and **UCAS**.

- You might also wish to check out individual university websites for further ideas including 'self-guided' campus and city tours. Finally, follow prospective institutions on social media platforms for 'real time' updates.

Admission Tests, Portfolios & Auditions

Some universities will require you to sit an admissions test in addition to your **UCAS application and your college studies**. To learn more [click here](#).

Medicine, Dentistry, Vet Science & related subjects: You may be required to sit the **University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT)** or the **BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT)**.

Law: Currently the following universities ask applicants to complete the Law National Aptitude Test (LNAT): Bristol, Durham, Glasgow, King's College London, LSE, Nottingham, Oxford, SOAS & UCL (but always check with individual universities). For further information about the test and how to prepare [click here](#).

Oxbridge: If you are applying to Oxford or Cambridge, it is highly likely that you will be asked to complete a subject specific admissions test. Please carefully check details using the university websites and speak to the XL Senior Tutors for additional support.

Art, design & creative degrees: A physical or digital portfolio of your work may be required at interview. Individual universities provide excellent advice about what they want you to include in your portfolio. Your college subject teachers will also be happy to help with support and advice.

Acting, dance, drama, music performance degrees: Both universities & conservatoires may require an audition or series of auditions. The content and format of auditions will be specific to each university/conservatoire and will require careful preparation. It is vital you start preparation early with the support of your performance teachers (both in and out of college).

Entry Requirements

You need to check that your predicted grades meet the entry requirements for your chosen courses. Speak to your Senior Tutor & subject teachers about your predicted grades if you have any questions.

Different universities/courses will have different entry requirements, even for the same course. Check these carefully. It is good practice to select some courses at the top of your predicted grade range, some at the middle and at least one below your predictions, as an insurance.

If you are a vocational student and you can't see your qualification listed on the entry requirements page, contact the university admissions team to check. As there are lots of different vocational qualifications taught in UK colleges, universities don't always list every single one that they accept. Your course not being listed does not mean that it wouldn't be accepted.

Don't forget to check any GCSE requirements that the course may have (commonly English Language, Maths or Science).

Type of Qualification

Undergraduate Degree is typically taken over 3 or 4 years.

Some programmes will give you the option to take a year in industry or a year to study abroad. Whilst taking this qualification you will be an 'undergraduate' student. If you are interested in studying more than one subject at university have a look at combined degrees which typically involve studying two subjects.

Foundation Year (sometimes called a Year Zero) is an additional year that is 'tagged' on to the start of a full degree. Useful if you don't have the correct entry requirements, or require different subjects for a change of direction. You'll usually see courses advertised like this – 'Marketing with Foundation Year'. Your HE journey could look something like this:

**Foundation Year (1 year) + Undergraduate Degree (3 years)
= 4 years**

Foundation Degree is a standalone qualification equivalent to the first 2 years of a 3-year degree. Like the Foundation Year it too has lower entry requirements than standard undergraduate degrees. You can choose to leave university after studying this part of the qualification or you can continue to gain the full honours degree by taking a 'Top-Up'. Your HE journey could look something like this:

Foundation Degree (2 years) + Top-Up (1 year) = 3 Years



Gaining Experience

It is really important that you gain as much relevant experience as you can, to give you a good understanding of the course that you are applying for, as well as providing material for your Personal Statement. This experience could have either a work-related or academic focus; both are important and ideally you will try to gain a mix of both. However, the crucial thing is to ensure that it is relevant to the course that you are applying for and that you take time to reflect on the skills, knowledge and understanding that you have gained.



Academic Experience

- Many universities are currently providing a range of online lectures delivered by their academics. There are also a growing number of 'virtual' summer schools now being advertised. For more information look at university outreach pages, the weekly Newsflash or the Opportunities section of the College Community course on Canvas

- Reading around your subject is really important. For a starting point, check the 'Geek Out' section within the course pages on Unifrog. This section gives you lists of articles, podcasts, videos and books related to key issues/principles within your chosen subject

- Reading academic journals can give you a really clear view of the developing research and key issues within your chosen field. You can access online journals and magazines on Canvas. Just click on the "Welcome to the Library" tile and look under Subject Guides and A-Z eResources. If you need help accessing any of the online resources email the Library at learningcentre@asfc.ac.uk

- MOOCs are short online courses from UK and worldwide universities that you can complete for free. Many are introductory courses that will help to prepare you for undergraduate study. Check [FutureLearn](#) and [Coursera](#) for more information, or use the MOOC finder on [Unifrog](#).



Work Related Experience

- Work-related experience/volunteering is viewed very favourably by employers and universities and can be gained both in person and online/remotely.

- Any part time work or work experience/placements gained in your L2 or A1 years is valuable, but you should spend some time considering how the skills, knowledge and understanding you have developed through this experience can be applied to your chosen course.

- There are a number of voluntary opportunities available that are either possible via social distancing or via use of technology or telephone. For more information see [Action Together](#).

- You can also complete 'virtual' work experience online. These opportunities range from a couple of hours to a week of activities, but all will allow you to hear directly from people working within your chosen field and give you the opportunity to ask questions. For more information look at the weekly Newsflash and the Work Experience section on the College Community course on Canvas.

- Watch 'a day in the life' videos at [iCould](#) for an insight into your chosen profession



Courses where experience is essential

Dentistry:

Check **Dental school Council** regularly for information from Dental Schools in the UK about admissions criteria under the current circumstances. Some good places to start are:

- Completing this **online course** about dentistry.
- Taking part in any voluntary experiences that allow you to show Care, Compassion, Communication etc such as the Age UK Telephone Befriender scheme
- Research dental roles (read about all roles, not just that of a dentist to help you to understand all the parts of the dental team) and watch real life stories **here**.

Teaching: it is important to check directly with the universities that you plan to apply to, as there may be some requirements around gaining experience or developing certain skills and areas of understanding.

Medicine:

Check **Medschools** regularly for information from Medical Schools in the UK about admissions criteria under the current circumstances. Some good places to start are:

- Following the advice in this **document**
- Completing this **online course** about the NHS
- Take part in 'virtual' work experience **here**
- Read these excellent blogs: **6 top tips for gaining experience under lockdown** and **5 things you can do now to support your application**.
- Taking part in any voluntary experiences that allow you to show Care, Compassion, Communication etc such as the Age UK Telephone Befriender scheme.
- Observe a GP **here**
- Read up on the core values and **attributes you need to succeed in Medical training**.

Nursing/Midwifery/Social Care & other allied Health Professions: relevant care experience.

- Taking part in any voluntary experiences that allow you to show Care, Compassion, Communication etc such as the Age UK Telephone Befriender scheme.
- Read about the principles of Nursing **here**
- Explore healthcare roles and learn more about the wider healthcare team **here**
- Explore social care roles and read case studies **here**
- Learn more about the role of nurses around the world **here**
- Learn about clinical empathy **here**
- Register your interest in the Understanding NHS Values: Becoming a Nurse or Midwife **course**
- Read up on the personal and NHS (Core) values needed to work in social **care**

Different types of Universities



Do you want a specialist University?

There are some universities that are more specialist, for example;

- **Creative universities specialising in art, design, media, creative degree subjects: such as Leeds Arts University, Falmouth University and Future-works.**
- **Russell Group universities** specialise in world class research. There are 24 member universities including the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge but also the University of Manchester and the University of Leeds amongst others. Some of these universities have a 'college' based system including Oxford, Cambridge and Durham. Graduates of Russell Group (and other competitive universities) are often targeted by graduate employers and tend to attract a higher wage upon graduation. However, this varies by course area so always check **league tables** and **complete university guide** to compare universities for your chosen field.

- **Performing Arts universities specialising in drama, acting, dance, music, for example: Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts (LIPA), the Royal Northern College of Music, LAMDA.** You will find some of these institutions by using the UCAS course search but some are Conservatoires and for some you will find information through, for example, **Federation of Drama schools**. Applying for a conservatoires style performance degree can be confusing – some degrees ask you to apply through UCAS Apply, some you apply directly to the university/school and some you apply through UCAS Conservatoire (which is different from UCAS Apply). Application deadlines vary, and can be **as early as 1st October** so please check this carefully. Visit **UCAS Conservatoires** for more information.

- **Sport:** The vast majority of universities have lots of facilities both for leisure and competitive sport. However, if you are looking for a university that excels in competitive sport, have a look at the British Universities & Colleges Sports **BUCS tables**. Some universities such as Loughborough and Bath regularly appear towards the top of the league tables.

There are other types of specialist universities – speak to the college Careers Team for further details.

Do you want to go to a campus or city university?

- A campus university is when all the students and facilities are on one site (accommodation, lecture theatres, the Student Union and so on). For example Edge Hill University, University of Keele and the University of York.
- A city university often has students and facilities spread out across the city. For example the University of Manchester, Liverpool John Moores University and the University of Newcastle. To get an idea of some of the different cities in the UK **click here**.

What size of university do you want to go to?

- Some large universities will have 30,000+ students (including international students) and will offer a massive range of subjects.
- In contrast, there are many smaller universities which may provide a strong sense of community. Some of the smallest 'universities' are when degrees are offered through colleges such as Ashton Sixth Form. You may also find other smaller universities offering a more specialist range of degrees such as creative universities.

Do you want to go to a local university or move away?

- A local university might be in Greater Manchester or parts of Yorkshire (such as Huddersfield) where you can live at home and travel in every day.
- There are also regional universities within the North West that are within an hour/hour and a half travelling distance from home. You would probably live at the university but could easily return home at weekends if you wish. These could be universities located in, for example, Sheffield, Liverpool, Leeds, Chester, Birmingham, Staffordshire, and Lancashire, for example
- There are great benefits to moving further afield, and the perfect course for you may be taught at a university that is a little further away, so don't restrict yourself too much within your research.
- **When you are looking at a university, always check how long it will take you to get there by car but also by train/public transport.**

Considering Apprenticeships?

Higher (Level 4+) & Degree (Level 6+) Apprenticeships

Increasingly there are opportunities to study a degree or a degree level qualification part time whilst working through a higher or degree apprenticeship or a school leaver programme. You could study for degree or even postgraduate level qualifications through the Apprenticeships route. This involves combining paid work with part time study. As an added bonus the employer would be paying your course fees so no student finance needed!

Employers, universities and professional bodies have worked together to devise these programmes. There are over 100 study "routes" covering many subjects and sectors of employment including science and engineering, business, IT and computing, arts, health, the police service and many more – although these need to be matched with an employer vacancy in order for you to be able to apply.

Employers large and small are involved and ASFC students have recently secured level 6 – 7 apprenticeships with national/international companies like Wates, PWC and Grant Thornton as well as locally with companies like Mottram Financial Services. You may find yourself working at a local office or site no matter the employer size, or you may need to travel further afield - or even be prepared to relocate just as you would to study full time - for the right opportunity.

Some employers, such as Marks and Spencer, recruit as early as mid-September for students due to leave college the following summer – so you need to start researching opportunities now. For more detailed information and advice about making applications, read our Guide to Apprenticeships.

Advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3)

Although these apprenticeships lead to qualifications of a lower level, they are still a good option for many students; and with a variety of employment sector vacancies they are a great way to step into industry for the first time. More importantly, you will be gaining valuable work experience, the knowledge needed to do the job, a weekly or monthly wage and a nationally recognised qualification. Advanced Apprenticeships are advertised throughout the year but those specifically for school and college leavers tend to advertise vacancies in the spring term. You could also consider registering with an apprenticeship provider as a way of 'matching you' with employers.

For more information speak to a member of ASFC careers team.

Undecided about Uni?

Gap Year:

You can apply through UCAS for a deferred entry to start in 2022. Generally universities are happy to consider students applying for deferred entry but it is vital you check with individual universities and admissions tutors.

There are many things you can do during your GAP year including working, volunteering and studying. Try and have a bit of a plan – you may want to learn to drive, you may want to learn to play the guitar – set yourself some goals no matter how small and have a look at some of the ideas below:

- MOOCs are free, short, online courses from UK and worldwide universities. Check **FutureLearn** and **Coursera** for more information and have a look at the MOOC finder on Unifrog.

- Work as a paid GAP Year tutor or mentor in the UK through, for example, **YIPIYAP** or **CityYear** or working for **NCS**.

- Working full or part time to save some money and build up your experience. **YINI** is a well established paid GAP year programme mainly in engineering, science, IT and finance. In addition, some large companies such as EY and IBM may offer paid GAP year placements. If you are looking for any type of paid work for summer 2021 onwards try and be prepared - be flexible, have a strong CV and be proactive.

- Volunteering is a really good way to use your time well. You will get a lot out of it as well as making a difference to your local community. Think about organisations that support local people such as Food Banks and have a look at opportunities through **Action Together**. Have a look at local hospitals as well as national and local charities such as MIND, Shelter, Age UK, National Trust. Due to the coronavirus outbreak organisations may have changed the way they provide services but are often still looking for volunteers.

- Manchester has always been a fantastic place with lots of creative projects to get involved with. Whatever your interests, whether it be design, music, games, theatre, writing, films... have a look to see what is happening and get involved.

- There are some organisations such as ICS, BUNAC, Camp America and Project Trust that have traditionally supported students to spend time abroad during their GAP year. It remains uncertain as to what opportunities there will be from summer 2021 onwards but have a look on **UCAS**.

Useful Links

- <https://careerfinderucas.com>
- <https://www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch>
- <https://www.ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk/advanced-apprenticeships>

- <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/apprenticeships/what-is-an-apprenticeship>
- <https://amazingapprenticeships.com/parents/>
- There is also lots of information about apprenticeships of all levels on Unifrog

Personal Statement Guidance

- 47 lines/4000 characters (including spaces) limit. Structure. Use paragraphs.

- You will struggle to start writing your personal statement if you have yet to decide on what course you would like to study at university ... do your research and make a decision first.

- You need to make it clear how your skills/experience are relevant to the course you are applying for/future career.

- Provide some information about academic and transferable skills, e.g. problem-solving, good time management, communication skills, team working ... EXPAND on the most relevant ones.

- Have you done any voluntary work, academic experience, work-related experience or paid employment which will assist you with the course/future career? If so, make reference to it.

- Don't start all of your sentences with 'I'.

- If you are unsure about whether to include certain information, think 'so what?' If you can justify the 'so what?' include it ... if it doesn't make a useful contribution or help explain why you should be offered a place on the course – delete it.

- Don't just tell – you need to show ... think HOW has playing football improved your teamwork skills; HOW has your work-related experience given you invaluable insight.

- This is YOUR personal statement – by all means seek advice but remember different people will have a slightly different view about what makes a perfect personal statement – your personality needs to shine through, just be yourself.

- Proof read and read it aloud to hear what it sounds like. Check spelling. Check grammar. Check punctuation.

- Write your statement first and then copy and paste it into your online application. When you add to your online application click 'save' regularly because it will time out after 35 minutes of inactivity.

- UCAS uses sophisticated software to monitor similarities in personal statements. Your personal statement must be your work.



Do

Brainstorm your ideas on paper before attempting to write anything.

Aim to write 4-5 paragraphs, making sure that each one flows in a logical way.

Open with a direct comment about why you want to study the subject you have chosen ... inspiration (be enthusiastic!!).

Mention your motivations for applying for the course (again, be enthusiastic!!).

Provide evidence that makes it clear why you are the right candidate to be offered a place. Be specific.

Don't

Over-used clichés (e.g. from a young age; ever since I was a child; for as long as I can remember I have been fascinated by...).

Humour – not worth the risk. What you see as funny others may not.

Don't waffle on about things which aren't relevant. If you feel you are starting to ramble, take a break and return to your statement when you are feeling more focused.

Lists, e.g. books you've read, plays you've seen, work-related experience placements you've completed – it's not what you've done but what you have learnt from it.

A balance of academic interests (75% approx) and extra-curricular activities (25% approx).

Include detail about volunteer work/work-related experience – if relevant to the course ... there is usually an aspect of the experience that will allow you to make it relevant!

Expect to produce several drafts before being totally happy. Leave yourself plenty of time for editing.

Proof-read, ask somebody else to proof-read, and then proof-read again ... check spelling and grammar.

Over-use the thesaurus – it's usually very obvious.

Plagiarism – all personal statements are screened using a Copycat similarity detection system.

Lies, exaggeration – honesty is the best policy.

Don't rely on a spellchecker - proof read as many times as possible.

Don't expect to be able to write your personal statement whilst watching TV - this is your future, you only get one chance, and it's down to you.

Registering & Completing Ucas

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION:

Once logged on there will be 6 sections to complete. You must complete all sections fully and accurately. Please read **“How to fill in your UCAS application”** very carefully and follow the step by step instructions.

Personal Statement Worksheet



Paragraph 01. The Course

01.

Your opening paragraph should highlight **WHAT** course you are applying for and **WHY**. Be enthusiastic!

- Why does this course interest you? (especially if you've never studied it before) – give specific and personal examples.

- What do you know about the course which makes you want to study it? Give evidence that you know what is required of you when you study this course – this shows the people reading it that you have done some research.

- What are you looking forward to doing on the course – any particular modules?

- Mention your current studies – how do they relate to the course you have chosen? Did they inspire you to choose this course?

- Are there any activities you have taken part in that relate to the course, or that have inspired you to choose the course?

Paragraph 02. Attributes, Skills & Achievements

02.

This section is all about the skills you have that will help you when studying your chosen course.

- Based on what you know about the course, why do you think that you're suitable for it? What makes you think that you will be good at it?

- What personal attributes do you have that will help you on this course? E.g. are you determined, focused, hardworking, independent?

- How has your experience in your studies at college helped you to develop those attributes and skills?

- Give an example of a time that you have displayed that attribute. E.g. have you had to work hard to get a piece of coursework done to a high standard? Have you managed to complete work even when there are distractions in your path?

- What skills do you have that will help you on this course? E.g. are you organised, methodical? Do you have good communication skills?

- What achievements do you have that show your suitability for this course? E.g. have you received an award that demonstrates your academic or practical skills?

- Have you done any extra qualifications outside of your studies at college that demonstrate your skills and attributes? How have they helped you develop those skills/attributes?

Paragraph 03. Relevant Experience

03.

This paragraph details any additional experience and knowledge you have gained that is relevant to the course you are applying for. This could include work-related experience, placements, or voluntary work you have undertaken but could also include academic experiences such as watching online lectures, completing a MOOC or online course, listening to podcasts or reading around your subject. Experiences may have been completed in person or online/remotely. Concentrate specifically on those aspects that are relevant to your chosen subject and make sure you describe the knowledge, understanding and skills you developed through this experience. It is not enough to just say what you did, you must explain what you gained. There is plenty of time over the summer to pick up more experience, see the section earlier in this document for more inspiration.

Paragraph 04. Hobbies & Interests

04.

This paragraph is all about what you like to do outside of your studies, **BUT**, you should only mention hobbies/interests which provide context to your learning.

- What are your hobbies/interests?

- What have your hobbies/interests taught you?

- What skills have you learned from them?

- How will they help you at university? (problem solving, patience, prioritising, lateral thinking, analytical skills, reading/writing, taking responsibility, team work).

Paragraph 05. Future Plans

05.

This paragraph will outline what your future plans are.

- In terms of the future – why are you doing this course?

- Where do you hope it will lead you?

- What do you want to get out of it?

- How will you use the knowledge and experience that you gain from university once you have completed the course?



UCAS Tariff

*Check you meet the entry criteria for the courses you are applying for



TARIFF POINTS*	A Level	BTEC Extended Diploma	CACHE Diploma (Childcare)	CACHE Certificate (H&SC)	BTEC Subsidiary Diploma/ WJEC Applied Diploma	EPQ
168		D*D*D*	A*			
160		D*D*D				
152		D*DD				
144		DDD	A			
128		DDM				
120			B			
112		DMM				
96		MMM	C			
84				A*		
80		MMP				
72			D	A		
64		MPP				
60				B		
56	A*				D*	
48	A	PPP		C	D	
40	B					
36				D		
32	C				M	
28						A*
24	D					A
20						B
16	E				P	C
12						D
8						E