

Holy Family Catholic Sixth Form



UCAS Guide
For Parents

At the end of Sixth Form study, we hope that our students continue the school motto '*Be the best you can be*' into their future lives, whether this be at university or into the world of work. Applying to university can be a daunting prospect for students and a step into the unknown for parents/guardians as well. We hope that the sessions we are putting on for students to attend during the COVID pandemic will help them to start to get to grips with what can be a confusing process. We normally run a parent session one evening in September but as we are unsure if this will be able to go ahead, we thought we would put together this booklet.

One of the most frequently asked questions by parents is how they can help their son/daughter prepare for university. Try to actively take an interest in their application; by looking at the timescale provided you will be able to see which stage they should currently be tackling. Familiarise yourself with the UCAS website and the Student Finance website; here you can help your son/daughter choose courses and look at entry requirements for their chosen courses. Encourage your son/daughter to take the application seriously; this is a formal document read by academics with a keen interest in the chosen subject. Help them to look at University website and look at what they have for offer in terms on online seminars and virtual visits, to help them make informed choices. Finally, read their personal statement, once, twice, three times at different points in the process. Students will be provided with lots of resources to help them write their personal statement and all of these can be accessed by Microsoft Teams (using their school email login).

If in doubt, ask your son/daughter questions, encourage them to talk to their teachers or call the individual universities. Remember this is their first step to independence! If you have any further questions or queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch (g.beddow@holyfamilyhighschool.co.uk)

Mrs Gillian Beddow / Mrs L Critchley
Head and Assistant Head of Sixth Form

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APPLICATION TIMESCALES

JULY 2020/August 2020

- Students to research Universities online and attend 'virtual open days' as well as attended any webinars that they may offer on particular subjects.
- Enrol onto the UCAS application system on the 7th/8th/9th July in the school based sessions
- Start to write and complete draft one of their personal statement. Email draft to GBE/LC and their form tutor for checking.

SEPTEMBER 2020

- Second draft of your personal statement to tutor and GBE/LC
- Ensure all personal details are completed on the UCAS application site
- Friday 30th September is the deadline for any Oxbridge, medical, dentistry and veterinary science applications. We need to process the application and write the reference to meet the 15th October deadline.
- Tutors and subject teachers start to write references for you prioritising the categories on the point above for early applicants.
- Book in a meeting with Becky to complete your education section of the UCAS application.

OCTOBER 2020

- All Oxbridge, medical, dentistry and veterinary science applications sent to UCAS by 15th October.
- All other applicants must now be completing their online application including having met with Becky to complete the education section.
- Final drafts should be underway for personal statements

NOVEMBER 2020

- November is the month for the Oxbridge and Medical, Veterinary, Law, dentistry exams.
- Even though the official UCAS deadline is the 15th January, we like all applications to be finished by the end of November where possible.

USEFUL UCAS DATES (check on UCAS site to confirm)

- 1st September 2020 Opening Date for receiving applications
- 30th September 2020 **School** Deadline for Oxbridge/Medicine/Dentistry/Veterinary Science Applications
- 15th October **UCAS** deadline for Oxbridge/Medicine/Dentistry/Veterinary Science Applications
- 30th November – school completion dates for applications
- 15th January 2021 Advisory closing date for applications from inside UK – **This is including school reference so it is our deadline NOT student’s deadline.**
- February 2021 Start of UCAS Extra (process of reapplying if all offers rejected or turned own)
- 31st March 2021 Final date for receiving offers/rejections from Universities (provided application was submitted by 15 January)
- 9th May 2021 Final date for accepting/declining offers (provided application submitted by 15 January)
- 7th July 2021 Last date for referrals through UCAS Extra
- August 2021 AS and A2 Results and start of Clearing (to be confirmed)
- September 2021 Last date for Clearing applications (to be confirmed)

This can be subject to change especially in the current COVID climate. We will keep students and parents up to date on any changes.

UCAS Induction Days 7th, 8th, 9th July 2020

These sessions are to help support your son/daughter in starting their UCAS application. We strongly advise all students to apply (Cost £25) All the information given will help students complete their university application and prepare for an interview whether they apply next year or in 3 years time

These sessions will continue throughout tutor time in September and will include:

- **How to choose the right course**
- **Personal Statement Masterclass**
- **Student Life**
- **Interview Skills**
- **UCAS Login**
- **Student Finance**
- **Life skills: budgeting, finance, healthy living etc.**

How can I help my child with their personal statement?

Students will begin their personal statement during the UCAS days when they have access to masterclasses delivered by the Sixth Form Team and then continue this in tutorials. Personal statements will need to be finished at home over the summer holidays and a first draft given to form tutors in September.

The Personal Statement section on the UCAS application form does not have spell check therefore students must write in Word (or a similar programme) and then cut and paste into the application when it is finished. The personal statements are limited to 47 lines and 4000 characters, so check this at various intervals. It is better to write too much then cut it down afterwards.

It is the student's responsibility to make sure the statement is of a standard to access the universities and courses he/she is applying to. Students should then complete a first draft to hand to their form tutors, make appropriate changes, then hand to subject staff, make appropriate changes, hand to any professional source available (e.g. if the student is applying for architecture, try to give it to an architect), finally hand to Mrs Beddow or Mrs Critchley.

In order to help your son/daughter you may want to read and re-read the personal statement at various intervals. Question your child on the information and encourage them to explain and justify their comments.

Who writes the reference?

Once the completed application has been received by the school, we begin to write the reference. This is compiled using information from subject staff and form tutors as well as comments from other staff involved with your son/daughter e.g. Head of Year.

The team of reference writers consists of form tutors, Subject specialists and Mrs Beddow and Mrs Critchley. We collate all information from staff and ensure that the reference reads in a professional and positive manner. No negative comments are written, but we have to write honestly.

How are predicted grades decided?

Predicted grades will normally be the same as either the AS result gained or an average of the last few formative assessments. These are based on the professional judgement of subject staff in September after the AS results.

Students must be aware of the predicted grades before they can decide on their final 5 choices.

How do we choose appropriate courses?

- Students should attend summer schools and taster courses (run virtually this year) to help determine the field they want to study. We have already encouraged students to apply to taster courses, webinars and virtual taster days on email during lockdown.
- Students should consider and research the subject they want to study; what do they enjoy, do they like “new” or “old” subjects, vocational degree, what are their realistic ambitions, career path. Many websites are available such as **www.agcas.org.uk** or **www.whatuni.com** to help inform about careers choices. Appointments with our career advisors as well as the Sixth Form Team will be available in September also.
- Log on to www.ucas.com and search through complete range of courses and universities. Look at UCAS Tariff Points System to compare points to AS and A2 level results expected, and other accepted qualifications.
- Draw up a short list of universities that offer the course and appeal – then prioritise – such as location, assessment method, course content, local facilities, accommodation etc.
- Investigate University Open Days and arrange visits. www.opendays.com gives full details.
- Once students have their predicted grades they should choose their final 5. These MUST be realistic. E.g. **one** choice with one grade above their predicted grades, **Two/Three** choices AT their predicted grades and **one/two** choices just below their predicted grades.

What happens after the application is sent?

Once the application is received we begin checks and writing the reference. **We aim for a two week (10 working days) turnaround if there are no mistakes in the application.**

If the application contains errors then it will be 'returned' electronically with an e-note attached explaining the problem. Students should receive an email from UCAS stating that it has been returned, however this will not happen if the email address has not been verified. Please check UCAS Apply daily until the application has been sent – this is the student's responsibility as staff are unable to physically chase everyone who has errors.

Once the reference is completed Mrs Critchley makes final checks and sends the application to UCAS. Students should then receive their **UCAS TRACK** confirmation letter and login details. UCAS TRACK is an online method of tracking the applications. Students will receive an email from UCAS confirming they have received the application and have sent it off to the various Universities.

Students will receive information on how to log on to the UCAS tracking system and a prompt on applying for their Student Finance.

When will we hear from the universities?

Students will begin to receive offers (or sadly rejections) from the universities any time after the application has been sent. They may receive individual emails from each University but should regularly be logging on to the UCAS Track Website as any offers made by universities should automatically appear there as well. For applications sent by the 15th January universities have a deadline date of 31st March to reply. Some leave it until the deadline date so do not panic!

Students will probably receive "**CONDITIONAL OFFERS**" – this means that they are offered a place provided they obtain a certain set of grades/UCAS tariff points (see p.21) after the final exams (grades will probably be based on expected A-Level exam results recorded by the School). UCAS points will take into account AS results (if taken), other exams, music qualifications etc. In exceptional circumstances or if all the required exams have already been taken an UNCONDITIONAL OFFER may be sent.

Will my son/daughter be interviewed?

Depending on the courses students may be required to attend interviews at the Universities – they will contact the student direct regarding this. If students are applying for Arts based subjects they may need to prepare a portfolio of work to take with them.

How do we accept/reject an offer?

Once all offers/rejections have been received students can make their final choices. (Universities may try and get students to accept immediately – they do NOT have to do this.) Students can choose **ONE FIRM OFFER** and **ONE INSURANCE OFFER**. Ideally the Firm Offer should be one which requires higher grades/points and the Insurance Offer should be one with lower requirements. We would strongly recommend that all students keep one firm and one insurance offer. This could save them having to go through Clearing should they not achieve the required results.

If they do not accept their chosen offers by the deadline date, all their offers will automatically be withdrawn and they will have to enter the Clearing Process

In the Choices option, they will be able to see whether their application has received a **Conditional** offer, **Unconditional** offer or is **Unsuccessful** or **Withdrawn**. Details of the decision including the conditions of the offer will also be shown.

Once your son or daughter has heard from **all** their universities, they will be e-mailed by UCAS to make their decisions using the TRACK system. The TRACK system will also indicate the reply deadline (Early May 2021). If they do not reply by this date their offers will automatically be declined.

What if my son/daughter gets no offers?

Should students receive five rejections through the UCAS site or choose to reject all of their offers they can apply for more courses. This is called **UCAS EXTRA** operating between late February & June.

Within UCAS EXTRA students can apply for one course at a time. If they are rejected from the first course then can then apply to a second, or third or fourth until UCAS EXTRA closes at the beginning of July.

What if my son/daughter does better than expected in his/her A-levels?

Students who achieve grades better than those required by their firm choice can enter **UCAS ADJUSTMENT**. Adjustment is a 5 day period beginning on results day when applicants can 'hold' their firm choice and register with UCAS to contact other universities to see if they can gain a place.

What happens on results day?

Results will be available for collection on the morning of results day. Students will be informed of the date and time before exams begin in May. Staff will be available to discuss results and advise about university decisions.

If students achieve the results necessary for their Firm choice then they wait for a email of confirmation from the University. This should also be on TRACK but some universities are a bit slow!

If students do not achieve the necessary results they should phone the Firm choice University and ask if they are still willing to accept them.

If the Firm Choice say no, students should ring the Insurance Offer University to either a) to confirm that they have the grades applicable to their offer or b) to ask if they could be accepted even if they haven't received the necessary grades.

If neither of these options is confirmed students will need to go through Clearing or consider alternative options to university.

Staff are available to help students on results day, so students should not leave the building if they have not achieved their expected results. We encourage parents to attend with their son/daughter in order to help them deal with any disappointing news.

What is clearing?

Clearing is a UCAS service that helps people find vacancies on higher education courses.

When your son/daughter logs in to TRACK there will be a CLEARING number on the welcome screen if they are eligible. Students will not be eligible for clearing until they have been rejected from the firm and insurance choice.

Students will then be able to search online for available courses and will need to phone the universities to confirm/discuss places. Students may be informally offered a number of places over the phone and be given a deadline in which to enter the final choice on UCAS.

The Student One Life Telephone Helpline offers free, independent and confidential advice if you have not achieved the grades you wanted. The number is: 0808 100 8000

Are there any bursaries available?

Some universities offer bursaries for particular subjects. Full details can be obtained from the University's own website and their Admissions office. For some courses students may be expected to obtain sponsorship from industry. The University should provide details of who to write to, but students should research the companies concerned to ensure the letter of application is relevant.

How do we arrange university accommodation?

Following acceptance of the firm and insurance offers students will receive information about accommodation and other related matters from these universities. If your son/daughter does not hear from the firm/insurance choice universities by May then they should phone to enquire.

My son/daughter is considering a GAP year. Does he/she still apply this year?

When completing the application form students should indicate that they want to take a gap year. This is an option on the 'choices' page when indicating the start date. Even if students do not indicate on the application form they wish to take a gap year, they can choose to do so, once they have received a place. They should talk to the university concerned about the deferral arrangements.

Applying to Oxford and Cambridge or for Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science.

If students are intending to make a competitive application, Mrs Beddow/Mrs Critchley MUST have their names by the end of the summer term.

- These are classed as early applications as they are highly competitive. Students will need to have submitted their application no later than 30th September 2020.
- Students will need a highly articulate and comprehensive personal statement in order to compete for these places. This should have been re-drafted a number of times over the summer holidays and then the final draft handed in no later than 16th September 2020. There are a number of books and websites available to help guide competitive personal statements.
- Students should have completed extra activities to prove their interest in their chosen subject. Universities will expect medicine/ dentistry/ veterinary science students to have completed work experience in different fields and students should reference what they have learnt in their personal statements. Oxbridge students should have read journals/books/studies around their subject in order to show their eagerness to learn.
- Students must be prepared for admissions tests or to submit extra work to the universities. This is often work that they have done as part of their A-Level and must have been marked. Some universities also ask for an extra application form for students to include module grades and an additional personal statement.
- Students making competitive applications must have competitive AS results if taken. This year students accepted at Cambridge achieved an average of 90% in their AS modules.

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE

www.studentfinance.direct.gov.uk

The Student Finance website has details online and to download in the form of student guides and parent guides. Students will be given further advice on finance through tutor sessions and assemblies. Students will be asked to enter financial details of parents/guardians – this can be done in private at home.

What loans are available for my son/daughter?

Tuition Fee Loan

Regardless of family income a student can apply for a loan to cover tuition fees.

Full-time student	Tuition Fee Loan
Full-time	Up to £9,250

Maintenance Loan for living costs

Students can also apply for a maintenance loan. A proportion of this is non-means tested which means that everyone will receive something. A proportion is also means tested. Below is a table on the current student finance cycle, however these figures change every year.

Full-time student	2019 to 2020 academic year	2020 to 2021 academic year
Living at home	Up to £7,529	Up to £7,747
Living away from home, outside London	Up to £8,944	Up to £9,203
Living away from home, in London	Up to £11,672	Up to £12,010
You spend a year of a UK course studying abroad	Up to £10,242	Up to £10,539

These loans attract a low rate of interest and repayments do not start until the student has left higher education and is earning over £21,000 per annum.

Those taking a Gap Year should not apply for funding until the following year.

What other costs should we consider?

Students are encouraged to work out a budget to see how much it's going to cost. Planning a weekly budget may be more appropriate than a monthly one. They will be at university for about ten-twelve weeks a term but may have to pay for accommodation for the whole year. Do include train or bus fair for home visits.

Budgeted in advance of university - (if self catering) – All kitchen equipment (pots, pans, cutlery, crockery etc), all bedding (including duvet as well as cover etc). Lap top and Printer

Budgeted for on a yearly basis - Insurance for private items in room (ie: laptop, printer, stereo system etc), Internet connection (could be charged around £100 for this privilege), TV license (all rooms with individual locks require a separate TV license).

Budgeted for each term/semester - Books for the Course – depending on the course as to how many are needed). May be safe to budget around £100 per semester, mainly spent at the start. Second hand books may be available. Latest edition may be needed so check before buying. Also University bookshop Blackwells, and Waterstones offer discounts at the beginning of term.

Budget for on a weekly basis: Accommodation (costs depend on the town/area of the university, if it is a campus university – budget for more if catering included or your son/daughter chooses an en-suite room), cost of paper/ink for a computer/printer, transport (to and from University, to and from Home and social travelling), food (if self catering - include cleaning materials, washing up liquid and so forth), clothing (budget realistically – warmer clothes if going up north!! walking shoes etc!), toiletries etc (all the usual, soap, makeup, personal hygiene, toilet paper etc) washing costs (using laundrettes costs money!!!) personal money (to buy presents/ cards at birthdays and Christmas etc) Social Life – how much a week to allocate for social life? (Contingency fund to cover unexpected events of which there are always some!!)

Useful resources:

www.ucas.com/parents

This is where **you** can access information on a range of topics from the application process to financial guidance. Register your details online to receive quarterly email bulletins full of useful information and advice. You will also receive a free copy of the UCAS Parent Guide sent to your home.

Many of the most frequently asked questions are answered on the UCAS website.

UCAS help line 0871 468 0468

www.studentfinance.direct.gov.uk

Unistats.direct.gov.uk for students' reviews of universities in the National Student Survey

www.gov.uk/student-finance-register-login

www.slc.co.uk

www.thebrightsidetrust.org

www.whatuni.com

www.university.which.co.uk

www.educationguardian.co.uk/students contains a budget planner

www.scholarship-search.org.uk

www.nhscareers.nhs.uk contains information on NHS bursaries.

<http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-tuition-fees-changes>

www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-loan-repayment-calculator

UCAS Tariff Tables

Grades and UCAS Points		
GCE A-Level	GCE AS Level	Tariff Points
A*		56
A		48
B		40
C		32
D		24
	A	20
E	B	16
	C	12
	D	10
	E	6

CTEC Level 3 Diploma	
Grade	Tariff Points
D*D*	112
D*D	104
DD	96
DM	80
MM	64
MP	48
PP	32

Extended Project Level 3	
A*	28
A	24
B	20
C	16
D	12
E	8