



UCAS

**HIGHER
EDUCATION
APPLICATIONS**

2020 – 21

What can university do for me?

Deciding whether to go to university could be one of the most important decisions of your life. Here are just a few things to think about.

...better jobs, better prospects and more choice

- Graduates are 50% more likely to get a job, and not just any old job. Those with higher education qualifications can get better jobs with higher salaries from a wider selection.
- Many employers now expect high levels of education among their staff. Therefore many non-graduates can only progress so far in their career, even if they do their job well.
- Whatever you want to do, your chances will be improved if you have a degree or diploma from a university or college.

...many jobs require a degree

- If you want to work in some professions (e.g. architecture, law, teaching, accountancy, engineering, medicine) you must have a relevant degree.

...earn 43% more

- Graduates with higher education qualifications, earn on average £12,000 to £16,000 a year more than those without (despite economic downturn). Average earnings per hour with the following qualifications:

Degree: £20.00 A-levels: £10.00 GCSEs: £8.68.

(Department for Education and Skills)

At least £200,000 plus over a career, (more for a female) 20 - 100% more by middle of working lives.

(The Guardian)

...develop valuable skills

- Going to university gives you valuable skills that will look great on your CV and be attractive to employers. Skills such as: IT, teamwork, problem-solving, proven readiness to work hard, time management, communication and presentation skills.

...work placements

- As part of some courses, students can take part in paid work placements. These give you the opportunity to gain valuable industry-based experience.

...study abroad

- Many university students also have the chance to participate in exchange programmes.

...do what you love doing

- It's not just about earning more money. There are thousands of higher education courses for every interest. Here are some ideas to get you started: sport, music, science, fashion, arts, business, and engineering.

...a good time!

- One of the best things about university is the chance to have a good time. Socialising plays a big part and there are loads of ways to have fun. Most universities have very active sports and social scenes with countless clubs and societies you can join. In the first few weeks of term there will be all sorts of events laid on (like freshers' week parties and club meetings). You'll meet lots of new people from all over the world and make loads of new friends.

...everything on your doorstep

- Many universities have student accommodation, gyms and other sports facilities, banks, medical and dental practices, bars, nightclubs, cafés, shops and restaurants, all based on campus.

...plenty of support

- Universities provide students with all sorts of support, including: advice centres, counselling, accommodation advice, disability support, chaplaincy, financial aid and debt management advice, job shops and careers centres.

...new interests and experiences

- It's a great opportunity to broaden your horizons and try out new interests.

Whatever you decide to do, you'll gain confidence, knowledge and independence, and some friends and experiences that you'll never forget.

Application checklist

Stay on track with your UCAS application by using this checklist.

Research stage

- Speak to your teachers, career advisers, family and friends about what you want to do next.
- Decide on the course you want to study.
- Check whether you need to have done some work experience to apply for the course. This can be a requirement of many courses, such as teaching, medicine or social work.
- Find out if you need to take any tests as part of your application process. For example, some universities may require you to sit the UK Clinical Aptitude Test or the BMAT to apply for a medical or dental degree.
- Identify universities that you want to go to, narrowing your selection to between 5 and 10.
- Research the universities using their websites and prospectuses. Speak to anyone you know who has been there.
- Visit the universities and/or attend open days.
- Decide on your five final university choices.
- Decide if you want to take a gap year.

Application stage

- Write your personal statement.
- Arrange a reference from your school.
- Register online at www.ucas.com/students/apply. Your school or college will give you a 'buzzword' that you will need to enter during the registration process.
- You may wish to view the guided tour of the application form at www.ucas.com/students/apply. This takes you through the different stages of the form.
- Complete the application form. You can save your form and return to it at a later date, so you don't need to fill it all out in one sitting.
- Get your teacher/careers adviser to check your application.
- Submit your application form before the deadline. It's important to get your application in early, so try to submit it at the beginning of the UCAS cycle in September.

Post-application stage

- Prepare for and attend any interviews you may be invited to by universities.
- If you don't receive any offers from universities, make further applications as appropriate through UCAS Extra.
- After receiving decisions from the universities, confirm your firm and insurance choices.
- Submit your forms for the HE maintenance grant and student maintenance loan.
- If needed, apply to university through clearing in August. This is for students who have not secured a place at university for the current year.

Applying to university

Applications to full-time higher education courses in the UK must be made through UCAS. For further information visit www.ucas.com.

How do I apply to university?

You can apply to university using an online application system – www.ucas.com/apply . Make sure that use the 'buzzword' that allows you to login to the website.

Tretherras Buzzword for 2020/21~ muppet21

Application sequence and important dates (for 2021 entry)

Our deadline for completion of the application is Friday 11th December 2020 so there is time for us to check your application and write your reference.

These dates are fixed, not like a piece of coursework where you can get an extension.

- 1st September 2020 ~ start of UCAS cycle, get your application started early (can log on and start the form from the end May 2020).
- 15th October 2020 ~ Deadline for applications to Oxford and Cambridge, as well as courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science.
- Friday 11th December 2020 ~ Tretherras deadline for completion of applications
- 15th January 2020 ~ Deadline for all university applications.
- 25th February 2021 ~ UCAS Extra, if you have not received any offers from your original choices you may add another course up until clearing.
- Confirm firm and insurance choices from the university offers that you have received, this must be done by the UCAS that appears on your offers sheet in UCAS Tracking.
 - This will be around the 5/6th May if you have had all your offers by March 31st.
- End of May 2020 ~ date for student loan forms to be completed.
- 30th June is the last date for UCAS applications to be submitted.
- 4th July 2021 – Last date for applications to UCAS Extra.
- 5th July 2021 – Clearing opens.
- Mid-August 2021 ~ clearing vacancies published in The Telegraph.
- Late September/Early October ~ start of academic year at university.

Are there any restrictions on choice?

- You can make up to **five** choices when applying to UCAS (2021 entry).
- Although students usually choose the same or similar courses at five different universities, you can apply for more than one course at a university.
- If applying to Oxbridge you must choose either Oxford or Cambridge; you cannot apply to both.
- If you apply to medicine, dentistry or veterinary science, you can only make four choices in one of these subjects and one further choice in a different subject.
- If you apply to more than one course, university or college it costs £26. If you applied for only one course at a university or college then it currently costs £20. (These are documented costs for 2021 cycle)

How can I check my application?

Once you have applied to UCAS you will be sent details of how to check the progress of your application using the online applicant enquiry service called UCAS Track.

Choosing a course

There are over 55,000 higher education courses listed in the *UCAS Directory*, offered at over 325 higher education institutions, including 128 universities. With

These tips may help you to decide:

1. Think about what you enjoy and do well, both at school/college and outside
2. Write down a list of jobs you'd like to do and why
3. Discuss your options with teachers, career advisers, family and friends
4. Whatever your interests, it's essential that you do lots of research.

How do I find out about courses?

There is no shortage of information to help you decide. An excellent starting point is the *UCAS Directory* but there are many other good sources:

- *UCAS Directory* to search for particular subjects and courses: www.ucas.com
- Higher education fairs where you can meet representatives from universities
- University websites
- University prospectuses and course leaflets
- We have copies of independent university guides such as *Virgin Alternative Guide*, *Times Guide*, *Push Guide*, *'Choosing Your Degree Course and University'*, *'HEAP: Degree course offers'*
- League tables (treat with care) to help you investigate which universities are best for particular courses:
- <http://education.guardian.co.uk/> and www.timesonline.co.uk/education
- Teaching quality information is available from www.tqi.ac.uk
- Visit universities to get an idea of what courses involve. Most universities hold open days, master classes and taster sessions.
- Talk to people who are already studying the subject.

Points to remember when researching courses

- What are the course options? How does the course content vary between universities?
- How long is the course?
- How is the course assessed? How much of the course is assessed by final exam, coursework or ongoing assessment?
- How is the course taught? What is the ratio of formal lectures and seminars to independent study? Is there a final year dissertation/research project?
- Are there opportunities to do a work placement or study abroad for part of your course?
- Is it possible to study more than one subject (combined degree) or study a few modules from other courses, for example languages or IT?
- What sorts of jobs do graduates from the course go on to do?
- What are the entry requirements? Make sure the entry requirements are in line with your predicted grades. If you are at all unsure, telephone the admissions tutor for your subject (telephone numbers are listed in university prospectuses).

A tariff calculator is available on the UCAS website (www.ucas.com/info), which has been designed to help you calculate your score to determine whether you meet the entry requirements for a course.

Once you have chosen a course you can look at universities offering the course.

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- University prospectuses and course leaflets
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UCAS tariff points system

What is the UCAS tariff?

It's the conversion of further education qualifications such as standalone AS levels and A-levels, VCEs, BTECs and OCRs etc, into one points system that universities can use to evaluate applications and make conditional offers. *This tariff system will change next year.*

How does it work?

Each qualification and grade is worth a number of points. All grades and qualifications are added together to give a total tariff point score.

Do all universities use tariff points to make offers?

No. Some universities still use typical offers for entry and some subjects require qualifications in particular subjects. If Exeter asks for BBB they will not accept ABC.

UCAS tariff points

A level and Advanced VCE

Official title: Advanced GCE and Advanced VCE

Grade	Tariff points
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

AS and AS VCE

Official title: Advanced Subsidiary GCE and Advanced Subsidiary VCE

Grade	Tariff points
A	20
B	16
C	12
D	10
E	6

Extended Project

Grade	Tariff points
A*	28
A	24
B	20
C	16
D	12
E	8

Pearson BTEC Extended Diploma (QCF)

Grade	Tariff points
D*D*D*	168
D*D*D	160
D*DD	152
DDD	144
DDM	128
DMM	112
MMM	96
MMP	80
MPP	64
PPP	48

Pearson BTEC Diploma (QCF)

Grade	Tariff points
D*D*	112
D*D	104
DD	96
DM	80
MM	64
MP	48
PP	32

Pearson BTEC Certificate (QCF)

Grade	Tariff points
D*	28
D	24
M	16
P	8

Cambridge Technical qualifications use the same tariff as Pearson BTEC.

Choosing a university

By deciding on a course you'll have narrowed down the choices available. However, there may be many universities or colleges that offer a course that appeals to you, especially if you are considering a popular subject such as English or history.

Most students have some idea of the location they want to be in – whether it's in the south of England, by the sea, miles away or close to home. Many opt for somewhere that's far enough away from their families to be independent but not too far to get home in a crisis, usually two-three hours drive. When you've found five to ten universities that appeal to you, you'll need to find out more about them.

How do I find out about universities?

University websites and prospectuses are a good place to start finding out more, but by far the best way to get a feel for a university is to visit. Before you fill in your UCAS form, visit as many universities as possible. Look out for open days, campus tours, taster sessions and master classes. This will give you a taste of what the university is really like and current students will often be on hand to answer your questions.

Once you receive an offer from a university you may also be invited to an interview or visit day. It's important to visit your first two accepted choices – your firm and insurance choices.

Questions to answer when researching universities

- Is it a campus or non-campus university?
- How far away from home is the university?
- Are the transport links good?
- What sort of location would you like to be in? For example, a country town or large city.
- Is there part-time work available? Does the university offer help in finding work?
- What bursaries/scholarships do they offer?
- What's the university's reputation like? League tables published by national newspapers will give you an indication of teaching quality and graduate employability.
- How many students attend the university? Is this important?
- How does the course compare with similar courses at other universities?
- What is the accommodation like?
- What are the study facilities like? For example, libraries and IT facilities.
- How good are the social and sporting facilities?
- What student support is available? For example, medical, financial and disability support. Will you need special support, such as dyslexia support?
- You'll be investing a great deal of time and money in your degree so make sure that you make an informed choice. Of the students who drop out of higher education in their first year, the majority do so because they have chosen the wrong course or the wrong university for them, so do your homework!
- ***Remember it is your decision, where you will spend the next three years of your life.***



Visiting and deciding on a university

Here's a checklist with some important factors for you to consider when visiting and deciding on a university

University					
Campus					
Distance from home					
Town/City					
League Tables					
No. of Students					
Course					
Accommodation					
Sport					
Support					
Part-time work					

UCAS Application 2020/21

Log on to www.ucas.co.uk

Select Apply

Select Register/Log in to use Apply 2021

Then go through Registration process

Write down your username, password and UCAS code for future use

When it asks if you do you want to register through a school/college click yes

It will then ask you to state the buzzword, which for this year is

Muppet21

You then complete each section as requested.

Remember that the student support arrangements Fee Code is 02 and then select Cornwall from the following drop down menu for local authority body

Make sure that you select Advanced Level for any course you are continuing with and Advanced Subsidiary (new) for those you have stopped and got a grade for. GCSEs need to be separated into normal (such Mathematics and English Language), double award (such as Science). Use your certificates to check boards and grades. It is an offence to lie about qualifications and the universities will want to see copies of your certificates at some point.

You are allowed up to 5 choices, which can be from 5 different universities or 5 courses from one university if you so wish! You can apply for one course from one university and this will result in a reduced cost for the application. (Currently costing £20 instead of £26).

Payment is through a credit/debit card once all sections are completed. This will only send the form to AJB, who will check the application, add a reference and then send it to UCAS.

Writing personal statements

Your personal statement is one of the most important elements of your application. It is your opportunity to sell yourself and secure an offer of a place. It's crucial that your statement reflects your personality, as well as showing your motivation and commitment to your chosen course.

What do I write?

There are no right or wrong formats. Here are just some suggestions.

- **Your course**
 - Show you've researched your chosen course. Why are you interested? What sparked your interest? What specific topics do you enjoy? If you're applying for more than one course try to identify common factors.
- **Career path**
 - If you have an idea of the career path you would like to follow, explain how the course fits.
- **Work experience**
 - Both related and unrelated to your course choice. Be specific about what you learned.
 - Refer to transferable skills gained, for example, communication, planning, time management and problem-solving.
- **Personal achievements**
 - Include any personal achievements and what they demonstrate, for example, participation in a fund-raising event may have involved: teamwork, research and organisational skills, commitment and perseverance. Describe any positions of responsibility you've held such as student mentor or team leader.
- **Extra-curricular activities**
 - You should include activities that support your course choice. Describe any visits you have made; for example, visits to art galleries for art courses or hospitals for nursing. Even if your interests aren't directly relevant it's important to give an impression of your personality, so mention any hobbies or gap year plans.
- **Top tips**
 - Aim to get your applications in as close to the start of the UCAS application cycle (beginning of September) as possible.
 - Start thinking about your personal statement weeks in advance – you'll need to write several drafts.
 - As a rough guide, use half the space to write about your chosen course. Use the other half to write about your chosen career path, work experience, achievements and extra-curricular activities.
 - Write in a positive style that you feel comfortable with, using simple words and clear sentence structures. Don't try to be funny as others may not share your sense of humour. Be analytical about yourself and the subject, rather than descriptive. Never start your personal statement, 'I have always been interested in...'
 - Be honest! You may be asked questions on your personal statement at university interviews.
 - Word-processed statements should be in 12-point type size as UCAS reduces the forms before sending them to universities.
 - Don't rely on a spell checker – proofread as many times as possible. It can be helpful to leave a few days between drafts, as it's often easier to pick up spelling and grammar mistakes after distancing yourself. Ask your teachers, parents and friends to make final checks.
 - Make sure all the details are correct – your address, email, qualifications and course code. Errors can delay your application.

Getting started with your personal statement

This worksheet is designed to help you get together all the information you could include in your personal statement. You can then use this as a starting point for your first draft.

Do not copy a personal statement; UCAS have a program that will check key phrases and your application will be rejected.

Course choice

Remember, as a rough guide; use half the personal statement to write about your chosen course. Why have you chosen the course?

What interests you about this subject area? What have you read about the subject? What have you watched/seen (such as FutureLearn/Ted talks/podcasts)

What specific topics do you enjoy and why?

Career path

Do you know what career path you want to follow? Give details.

How does the course tie in with your chosen career?

Personal achievements and responsibilities

Add any details where relevant, which you could include in your statement. Have you been a prefect?

Have you been a member of your school council?

Are you involved in peer counselling or mentoring?

Have you completed the Duke of Edinburgh Award?

Have you helped to organise any events, for example a fundraising event?

Have you taken part in school/college assemblies or helped with open days?

Extra-curricular activities

Add any details where relevant, which you could include in your statement. Do you play a musical instrument?

Are you a member of a choir, an orchestra or a band?

Do you play any sports?

Have you represented the sixth form or other organisation in a sport?

Have you represented the sixth form in any other way?

Have you been involved with any dramatic productions?

Are you involved in any charity or volunteer work?

Do you have any other hobbies?

Have you been on any relevant visits, for example to art galleries for art courses or hospitals for nursing?

Anything else?

Your skills

It is a good idea to mention any skills that you have gained through your **work experience or extra-curricular activities** and give examples of when you have used them. Your work experience or hobbies may not always seem to be directly relevant at first, but you will have used and developed important skills that will be valued by universities. You should mention skills that are related to the course, in addition to more general skills.

Use the section below to note the skills you have and examples of where you have used them.

To help start you off, an example is provided.

Skill Example(s)

Communication skills ~ *Dealing with customers face to face and over the phone when working weekends at Marks and Spencer.*

Organisational skills

Working as part of a team

Leadership skills

Using Information Technology

Creativity

Problem-solving

Communicating in another language

Negotiation skills

Is there anything else? Consider specific skills relevant to your course.

University interviews

It's important to prepare for your interview. Admissions staff can tell the difference between those who have and haven't prepared.

How to prepare

- **Know where you're going**
Plan your route – arriving late doesn't make a good impression and you may miss your slot.
- **What to wear**
If in doubt check whether to wear casual or smart dress.
- **Research the university and course**
Check out prospectuses, course leaflets and websites. Departmental web pages should give an idea of the course structure, topics, modules you can choose and work placements (if relevant). Some websites also have student profiles, so you can find out what current students think of the course.
- **Current affairs**
Keep up to date, especially with developments in your chosen area of study. Read newspapers, relevant magazines, look out for radio, TV programmes and documentaries and use the internet. Good news sites include: www.bbc.co.uk and www.channel4.com.
- **Personal statement**
Refresh your memory on what you have written by re-reading your personal statement.
- **Practise**
Think of suitable answers and questions to ask in advance (it's not the best time to ask about nightlife and social clubs). Don't memorise your answers word for word as it will sound false. Practise with a friend, relative or teacher, this will increase your confidence and reduce your nerves on the day.
- **Interview format**
Make sure you know what to expect. Interviews may be with one or two admissions tutors, they could be a group interview, or involve written or performance tests.

Some typical questions

These are intended as a guide to help you practise, there are websites with a range of possible questions for various degrees. Your interviewer will ask you more detailed questions.

1. Why did you apply for this course?
2. Which of your current subjects do you enjoy the most and why?
3. What are your least favourite subjects and why?
4. What are the latest developments in your proposed area of study?
5. What are your best qualities?
6. Why would you make a good teacher/surgeon/psychologist?
7. Have you done any related work experience and if so what did you learn?
8. Where do you see yourself five years from now?
9. What interests do you have?
10. Do you play any sports?

Tips for the day

- ...**relax, don't look bored!** It's also your opportunity to find out more about the university.
- ...**how you come across** is as important as what you say.
- ...**essential attributes** are interest, enthusiasm and confidence.
- ...**take a copy** of your personal statement for reference.
- ...**listen carefully** to questions and answer what's asked.
- ...**if you don't understand the question** or don't know the answer, say so.
- ...**if you feel you've answered badly**, forget about it and carry on.
- ...**ask your own questions**, find out more about the university and course.
- ...**enjoy your day**, explore the university, city/town and area.

Student finance facts (2021 entry)

What will it cost?

Tuition fees

- At almost all universities tuition fees of approximately £9,000 per year will be charged on all undergraduate courses. You can choose not to pay this until after you graduate by taking out a **tuition fee loan** – see the table below.

Living costs

- A rough indication of living costs for is between £6120 and £8500 for a 38 week year.
- The National Union of Students (NUS) provides tips on managing your money and has information on the best student bank accounts, overdrafts, discounts and finding work – visit www.nusonline.co.uk.
- The Student Finance Direct Calculator will help you estimate the financial support for courses starting in 2018, visit <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>

What help is available?

You may be worried about the cost of going to university but there is financial support available. You will receive help towards the cost of your tuition fees and student living costs in the form of bursaries, student loans and grants.

For more information on student finance visit

www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/index.htm.

For more information on student finance for NHS courses visit

www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk.

You don't usually need cash up front to pay your tuition fees

You can apply for a Tuition Fee Loan of up to £9,250. If you're starting an Accelerated Degree course you can apply for a Tuition Fee Loan of up to £11,100.

You have to repay any Tuition Fee Loan you borrow.

You can also get help with your living costs

You can apply for a Maintenance Loan to help pay for your living costs such as books and rent. How much you can get depends on your household income, and where you live and study. This has to be repaid.

Where you live and/or study	Maximum Maintenance Loan
Living with your parents	£7,747
Living away from home, studying outside London	£9,203
Living away from home, studying in London	£12,010
Living and studying abroad	£10,539

It's important you let us know if there are any changes to your living arrangements as it will affect your student finance. This is so we can make sure you get the right amount of student finance. You can update any changes in your online account.

You won't need to repay anything until you're earning over the repayment threshold. Repayments will be based on your income, not how much you borrow.

Interest is charged

Interest is charged from the day your first payment is made to you or your uni or college, until your loan is repaid or cancelled. The interest you're charged won't affect how much you repay each month.

After 30 years your remaining loan is cancelled -

even if you haven't repaid a penny!

If you've got a disability, you could get EXTRA help

You could get Disabled Students' Allowances if you've got a disability, including a long-term health condition, mental-health condition or specific learning difficulty. The amount you can get depends on your needs, not your household income, and doesn't need to be repaid.

Allowance	Maximum amount available
Non-medical helper allowance	£23,258 per year
Specialist equipment allowance	£5,849 for your whole course
General allowance	£1,954 per year
Travel allowance	Reasonable spending on additional travel costs you have as a direct result of your disability

Budget planner

Work out how much you will spend at university using the budget calculator below. There's an example on the reverse side of this page with estimated expenditure to get you started. You can also work out your finances using the budget calculator on the website www.brookes.ac.uk/studying/finance/calculator.

Income

Breakdown	Potential annual income (£)
Student maintenance loan	
Contribution from parents	
HE maintenance loan	
University busary	
Total annual income	

Expenditure

Breakdown	Monthly expenditure (£)
Accommodation	
Bills (gas, electric and water)	
Telephone	
Transport	
Food	
Household goods (toiletries/laundry)	
Clothes	
Socialising/sport	
Books/stationary	
Insurance	
Other expenses	
Total monthly expenditure	
Number of months at university	
Total annual expenditure	

Budget calculated

Total annual income	
Total annual expenditure	
Cash remaining	

Don't panic if you get a shortfall! Most students work during the holidays if they need to earn a bit extra. You'll also be able to get a student bank account with an overdraft, but be careful to check out repayment options.

Tuition fees

Tuition fees for full-time undergraduates at almost all universities will be £9,000 per year, no evidence that this will rise for 2017 (These are not included in the budget

calculator because you do not have to pay them until after you graduate and then only as a percentage of your salary that you earn over £21,000 per year. For the most up-to-date information on tuition fees, visit: www.dfes.gov.uk/studentsupport

Example of a student's income and expenditure for last year.

(This is based on a student studying at Oxford Brookes, living away from home in halls, with an average parental income of £25,000 pa).

Income

Breakdown	Potential annual income (£)
Student maintenance loan	
Earnings/contribution from parents/other income	
University bursary	
Total annual income	

Expenditure

Breakdown	Weekly expenditure (£)
Accommodation (based on self-catered halls)	115 -150 (ensuite costs more)
Bills (included in hall price)	0
Telephone + Internet	5 -15 (may be part of accom. cost)
Transport	6 - 10
Food, toiletries, cleaning, laundry	30 - 60
Clothes	15 - 45
Socialising/sport	25 - 65
Books/stationery	10 – 15 (use library/second hand)
Insurance	2 - 5
Other expenses (Healthcare, Hair, TV licence?)	?
Total monthly expenditure	200 +
Number of months at university	9.5 (38 weeks)
Total annual expenditure	8,000 +

Budget calculated

Total annual income	
Total annual expenditure	8000 +
Cash remaining	? (depends on contributions *)

Change the amounts entered to reflect your situation.
See **Student finance facts** page for information on financial support or visit

www.dfes.gov.uk/studentsupport

Taking a Gap Year

Many students decide to take a gap year before they begin university. This can be a productive way to spend a year and is viewed as a positive experience by many universities and employers. However, you must use your year constructively in order to show it was worthwhile.

If you are thinking of taking a year out, here are some things to consider

What you could do

There is a whole range of things you could do during your gap year, like:

- Travel
- Teach abroad
- Volunteer to work on a project at home or abroad
- Work in a paid position to save some money for university
- Gain some unpaid work experience
- Undertake further study or training

The pros and cons of a gap year

Pros

- You may feel more energised and refreshed after a gap year, which could lead to you feeling more motivated towards your studies.
- You may have the chance to work or study in an area related to your course, which will help prepare you for your further studies.
- You may have the opportunity to travel, see new places and have new experiences.
- If you decide on paid work, you can earn some money to help finance your degree.
- You could gain a sense of real personal achievement through your gap year activities.
- A year of more independent living can mean that you are more mature when you begin university.
- If you decide to work or volunteer, you can gain new skills and develop existing ones.

Cons

- You may find it hard to settle back into your studies.
- You may not be able to discipline yourself for independent study when you return.
- It could be expensive, for example if you decide to travel or do unpaid work experience.
- Your friends may go off to university, while you will be a year behind them.
- If you don't spend it productively, this could give employers a bad impression.

Prepare yourself

If you want to take a gap year, you'll need to decide what you want to do and then plan it carefully.

- When deciding what to do, make sure you understand your reasons for a gap year, as this will point you in the right direction.
- A useful starting point is the UCAS gap year guide at www.ucas.com/gap.
- Research the options so you make the right decisions – there are a lot of organisations which can give you gap year ideas and more information about what's involved.
- Gap year organisations can be helpful, but you don't have to use one. Make sure you shop around to find the best deal and the gap year that's right for you.
- Set yourself goals, so you know what you want to accomplish in your year out.
- Plan your finances, so you don't get into debt. Think about how much you need to earn and/or how much you will spend.

Completing the UCAS form

If you want to take a gap year, you can still apply to universities one year in advance. You will need to indicate the year that you wish to start on your UCAS form.

Revision tips

You have the offer and now you need to get the grades!

Here are some suggestions to help you get the most out of revision for exams.

General points

- Revise in a comfortable environment
- Read notes aloud
- Only revise one topic per session
- Ensure you take breaks at least every two hours
- Share techniques with friends
- Be sure of exam dates, times and locations
- Check what you can take into the exam, e.g. calculators, dictionaries etc.
- Make sure you know how you'll get to the exam and allow plenty of time
- Eat well and drink plenty of water
- Don't stay up all night revising – go to bed early.

For further revision tips visit www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/onelife/education.

Exam format

- Is the exam paper divided into sections and are there compulsory sections?
- How many questions are there and how many must be answered?
- Are there multiple choice questions?
- What is the weighting for marks and how long should answers be?
- Do some topics appear annually (perhaps in different formats)?
- Read instructions CAREFULLY

Course material

- Re-draft and organise lesson notes
- Write up any missed lesson notes
- Locate useful material: course texts, summary notes, tapes, CD-roms, marked assignments, handouts and past exam papers

What to revise

- Make a list of course topics and look for topics on past papers
- Organise all material on the topic
- Make a list of revision topics – choose more than the number of questions as a backup
- Show revision plans to your teacher

Revision timetable

- Allow time for unexpected events
- Timetable in any social commitments
- Think about when you learn best – morning/evening
- Balance the amount of time spent revising, don't burn yourself out early
- Don't leave it all to the last minute
- Split up your best and worst subjects

Condense the information

- Break down each topic into manageable chunks using key words and concepts
- Do this using: summary sheets (highlighted and colour coded), prompt cards, Post-It notes, mind maps, posters, rhymes and audio tapes

Rehearse questions

- Analyse past exam questions. What part of the course is the question referring to and how would you distribute marks?
- Make sure you understand process words, e.g. evaluate, justify, compare etc.
- Identify key and process words before answering questions
- Practise writing quick introductions and conclusions
- Practise timed answers

Websites to explore

General advice on higher education

- www.connexions.gov.uk The Connexions service offers a range of guidance and support for students aged 13–19.
- www.nusonline.co.uk The official website for the NUS
- www.hero.ac.uk Higher education and research opportunities in the UK.
- www.fasttomato.co.uk Interactive careers and education guidance for teenagers.
- www.hcstuff.com Guide to life and learning.

Courses and applying to university

- www.ucas.com *UCAS Directory* of all higher education courses available at UK universities and colleges, how to apply and other frequently asked questions on undergraduate study.
- <http://education.guardian.co.uk> and www.timesonline.co.uk/education To search for league tables to compare UK universities and subjects, as well as articles on current affairs.

Open days

- www.opendays.com For information and dates of university and college open days.

Graduate careers

- www.thebigchoice.com The student and graduate job site. Provides information on career choices for students at all levels.

Advice for students with disabilities

- www.skill.org.uk Skill is the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities and provides information and advice for disabled students.

Student finance

- www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport The most up-to-date information on student finances. Advice on tuition fees, student loans and financial help.
- www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk More information and advice on student finance, including a calculator which can help students find out what financial support they are likely to get.
- www.slc.co.uk For information on student loans.
- www.ppa.org.uk/ppa/swb.htm For information on bursaries for social care students.
- www.studentmoney.org Guide to everything you need when planning and organising your student finances.
- www.dfes.gov.uk/localauthorities Local authority information.

Current affairs

- www.channel4.com and www.bbc.co.uk To keep up to date with developments in current affairs.

Gap years

- www.ucas.com/gap Advice to help you plan and prepare for your year out.
- www.gapyear.com Gap year ideas and travel deals.
- www.gapyearjobs.co.uk Details of current job vacancies suitable for a gap year student.
- www.bunac.org An organisation offering working holidays, flexible work and travel programmes and volunteering and teaching placements. This is just an example of what's available, there are many more organisations, so make sure you research all the options thoroughly.

Personal Statement First Draft

Introduction

Your interest in the subject (in school)

Your interest in the subject (out of school) – what you read etc

Personal

Summary

Rewarding AS WELL AS *In addition*
 strengthen Used my initiative Enhanced
 Explore my interests This has furthered my Creativity
 I undertook..... Responsibility
 Skills I have gained.... Participated in.....
 Hard work
 This has expanded my knowledge of.....
 I have acquired skills which.....
 Combining....with.....has taught me....
 My pursuits.....
 Broadening my interest
 Commitment I learnt from.....
 The opportunity
 I was determined to..... My involvement with....
 I am continuing to develop.....
 I particularly enjoyed...

Admissions tutors often get asked by students if it is a good idea to start a personal statement with a quote from an expert in the field, famous author or scientist. It is only acceptable to do this if you directly relate it to your course and why you want to study it, showing that you understand the quote and make it flow into your introductory paragraph.

Wider Skills

This is where you give an account of your non academic achievements in or out of sixth form and your interests and hobbies. They will give the admissions tutor a glimpse of the kind of person you are outside of the classroom and what skills you've developed through these interests, work experience or a part time job.

<u>Skill</u>	<u>Activity</u>
Communication	
Commitment	
Time Management	
Teamwork	
Initiative	
Public Speaking	
Sense of Responsibility	
Adaptability	
Organisation	
Leadership	
Research and Analysis	

Activity	Description	Why it has made you more suitable
Outside reading		
Voluntary work		
Work experience		
Career aspirations		
Summer school		
Subject content		
Community activities		
Sixth form clubs		
Clubs out of school		
Trips/Exhibitions		
Workshops		
Classroom support		
Documentaries/Articles		
Competitions/Awards		
Other?		

