



# UCAS guide for Parents

Castle Rock School



*(The information in this booklet is designed as a guide – we hope it is as accurate as possible, but you may need to check on the UCAS website, University, Student Finance and other Websites for clarification of dates, financial and other information)*

Dear Parents/Guardians,

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 Future's Day's which ran in June coupled with this booklet can answer all of your questions and provide you with the information to help your son/daughter take that important step.

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 organise visits to universities; look at university websites and take note of open day dates – you can even go with them! Finally, read their personal statement, once, twice, three times at different points in the process. Students will be provided with a booklet entitled 'Writing your personal statement' with step by step instructions on structure and content to help them begin the task.

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!

Mrs E Parker  
Assistant Director of Sixth Form

# **Contents:**

Application Timescales	4
Useful UCAS Dates	6
Frequently asked questions	7
Applying to Oxford and Cambridge or for Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science.	13
Applying for Art Foundation and UCAS Conservatoires.	14
Higher Education Finance	15
Other Useful Resources	18
Tariff Tables	19

## **APPLICATION TIMESCALES**

### **JULY 2020**

- Students organise open day visits and attend taster courses.
- Enrol onto the UCAS application system (explained via UCAS Future's Day on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020).
- Enrol onto UCAS Hub for additional support.
- Attend Masterclasses on Personal Statements, Interview Skills, Student Finance, University Life and Choosing the Right Course via Unitasterdays and UCAS HUB.

### **JULY/AUGUST 2020**

- Complete PERSONAL DETAILS, ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, EDUCATION, and EMPLOYMENT sections.
- Continue research, visits and other investigation regarding subject and university choices.
- Discussion for those applying for Oxbridge, medicine, dentistry or veterinary science – Make yourself known to Mr Frost
- Write a first draft of Personal Statement and ensure it is checked by tutors (in Word to cut and paste into application at a later stage). This will be submitted as part of the enrolment in the Autumn Term.

### **SEPTEMBER 2020**

- Second draft of your personal statement to tutor – no later than 9<sup>th</sup> September. There will be a quick turn around for tutors to check these and then give the students back changes to make by 16<sup>th</sup> September.
- Help with personal statement from tutors, then to Mr Frost and Mrs Parker.
- Complete application as soon as possible for checking.
- Friday 30<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> October deadline.

### **OCTOBER 2020**

- All Oxbridge, medical, dentistry and veterinary science applications sent to UCAS by 15<sup>th</sup> October.

- Deadline for all other applications 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020. All applications received by this date will be processed within 10 working days provided they contain no errors. We usually have up to 100 applications to process therefore we ask students to meet this deadline so we can deal with any issues before the UCAS deadline of 15<sup>th</sup> January. Applications will be dealt with on a first come first serve basis.

## **NOVEMBER 2020**

- November is the month for the Oxbridge, Medicine, Veterinary and Dentistry exams. For example, the UCAT test.

## **USEFUL UCAS DATES (check on UCAS site to confirm)**

- 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020 Opening Date for receiving applications
- 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 **School** Deadline for Oxbridge/Medicine/Dentistry/Veterinary Science Applications
- 15<sup>th</sup> October **UCAS** deadline for Oxbridge/Medicine/Dentistry/Veterinary Science Applications
- 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020 **School** deadline for student 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)
- 3rd June 2021 Final date for accepting/declining offers (provided offers received by 6<sup>th</sup> May)
- August 2021 A Level and BTEC Results and start of Clearing (to be confirmed)
- 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021 Last date for Clearing applications

### **How can I help my child with their personal statement?**

Students will begin considering their personal statement during the Futures days when they had access to a virtual masterclass delivered by a university ambassador. 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 to get advice and make appropriate changes. They could also seek support of 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 Mr Frost or Mrs Parker. They will go through it carefully and may ask you to refine it further. Once the complete form is sent, we cannot change it. This is why we have these different levels of quality assurance, to ensure it gives a positive and realistic impression of the student.

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, Heads of Faculty and Mr Frost and Mrs Parker. 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 be decided by subject staff from student performance in a variety of tasks – internal assessments as well as it being a realistic trajectory for each individual student. Therefore, their predicted grade may well be higher than their current grade as the teacher may feel they will reach a higher grade by the time they reach the end of year 13.

### *How do we choose appropriate courses?*

- Students should attend summer schools and taster courses to help determine the field they want to study. We have already encouraged students to apply to taster courses/online seminars for many universities.
- 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 Mrs Parker (Destinations Advisor) and Mr Frost are available to help explore the opportunities available.
- Log on to [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) and search through complete range of courses and universities. Look at UCAS Tariff Points System to compare points to A level and BTEC 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](http://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 Mr Frost or Mrs Parker will ‘return’ the application electronically with an e-note attached explaining the problem. 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 Mr Frost and Mrs Parker make the final checks and send the applications 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 a letter through the post 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 letters 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 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 other exams, music qualifications etc. In exceptional circumstances or if all the required exams have already been taken an **UNCONDITIONAL OFFER** may be sent. IF a student accepts an **UNCONDITIONAL OFFER** this is final and they cannot hold an insurance offer for any reason.

### **Will my son/daughter be interviewed?**

Depending on the courses students may be required to attend interviews or auditions 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 2017). 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 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 letter/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, Mr Frost MUST have their names by the end of the summer term.**

- These are classed as early applications as they are highly competitive. The UCAS deadline is 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020. However, you will need to hand your completed application in by 30<sup>th</sup> September to allow references to be added and relevant checks made. Mr Frost will meet you on a regular basis from early September to discuss and refine the application.
- 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. This should be given to Mr Frost at the start of the Winter term. 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. However, under lock down this has been very difficult. So virtual experiences are very relevant too, in the current climate. 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. The exams officer at school will be informed by Mr Frost so arrangements can be made for the students to be registered for any tests. They may also want to see what you have done that is relevant to the subject. 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. These requirements can easily be found on the university websites.

## **Applying for Art Foundation.**

- Art Foundation applications are made directly to the college or institution that runs the course. Students should meet with Mrs Parker or discuss their options with their Art teacher.
- Most Art Foundation courses have an application deadline and each application form is different.
- Students may have to include a personal statement or a school reference on the first application form, therefore students **MUST** give the form to Mrs Parker. Some forms simply ask for the name of a referee to contact.

## **Applying for Conservatoires**

- The UCAS Conservatoire application is separate to the main UCAS application. It is specific to students wanting to apply to specialist college's for Art, Media/Film, Music and Dance.
- Students can make up to a further six institutions however, you are likely to need to pay for auditions at each one as well as the fee to use UCAS Conservatoire application system.

Each conservatoire has its own strengths and specialisms, so it's important to research all of them to find the right fit for you. For example, although all conservatoires offer music courses, only two offer drama courses, and some offer subjects like film and production. To help decide, research what graduates from each conservatoire have gone on to do, to see if this fits with your aspirations.

The conservatoires in the UCAS Conservatoires scheme are:

- [Royal Birmingham Conservatoire](#)
- [Bristol Old Vic Theatre School](#)
- [Leeds College of Music](#)
- [Royal Academy of Music](#)
- [Royal College of Music](#)
- [Royal Conservatoire of Scotland](#)
- [Royal Northern College of Music](#)
- [Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama](#)
- [Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance](#)

## HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE

\*\* It is a good idea for the student to set up a Bank Account during the Spring Term (year 12). They will need to quote this on the Finance Form as any loan will be paid direct into this account.\*\*

[www.studentfinance.direct.gov.uk](http://www.studentfinance.direct.gov.uk)

### *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.

<b>Full-time student</b>	<b>Tuition Fee Loan</b>
Full-time	Up to £9,000

#### **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 based on the 2016/17 student finance cycle, however these figures change every year.

Income	Maintenance Loan (London University)	Living with parents	Maintenance Loan (Outside London)
Less than £25,000	£10,702	£6,904	£8,200
£30,000	£10,103	£6,322	£7,612
£35,000	£9,503	£5,740	£7,023
£40,000	£8,904	£5,158	£6,434
£45,000	£8,304	£4,576	£5,845
£50,000	£7,705	£3,994	£5,256
£55,000	£7,105	£3,412	£4,667
More than Approx £69,500	£5,330	£3,039	£3,821

**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 launderettes 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](http://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

<b>GCE A-Level</b>	<b>Tariff Points</b>
<b>A*</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>16</b>

<b>BTEC Level 3 Extended Certificate</b>	
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Tariff Points</b>
<b>D*</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>P</b>	<b>16</b>