



# Higher Education Evening

# Post-18 Options

Post-18 options are...

**...the range of educational and professional opportunities available for students to move onto after the completion of their A Levels.**



Waldegrave  
Sixth Form

# Feelings

*Nervous*



*Apathetic*

*Confused*



Waldegrave  
Sixth Form

# Goal



*The goal when assessing your post-18 options is for students to decide on a route that matches their **personal** attributes, interests and aspirations.*



Waldegrave  
Sixth Form

# Routes

*Sixth Form*

*University*

*Employment*

*Apprenticeship*

*Gap Year*



# University

Similar subjects to A Levels and some new options. E.g. Medicine / Law

Courses typically last three or four years

Assessed through a combination of coursework and exams

Academic qualification that builds on A Level qualifications

# University

Some practical, laboratory or field work depending on the course

Most courses focus on a single subject

Some joint honours courses may include two or three subject areas

Mostly theoretical work taught through lectures and seminars

# Apprenticeships

Places are limited and applications are there competitive

Qualifications that train to work in a particular industry

80% on the job training learning practical skills in the workplace

Some apprenticeships have degrees embedded within them

## Apprenticeship

20% off the job training learning theory in a college or university

Courses last from one to six years depending on the industry and level of qualification

Considered an employee and would be paid

Assessed against an industry standard through exams, coursework and workplace observations

# Gap Year

School can support with university applications during a gap year

May secure a university place with deferred entry in advance

No qualifications involved but can acquire useful life experience

May be taken straight after Sixth Form or after finishing university

## Gap Year

Advisable to make a plan in advance so the time is not wasted

May involve rest, travelling, work experience or part time work

Can give students more time to consider their options

Should only last for one year but this relies on students making a plan

# Employment

Ultimately what students will end up doing after university or an apprenticeship

Students can go straight into employment after Sixth Form

Only a limited range of careers will be open to them without further study

Can be a good way of gaining work experience before university

## Employment

Can be a good option if they do not enjoy learning

Jobs that are available may be low paid or have limited scope for progression

Jobs can be hard to find

Allows students to start earning money straight away

# Trends

- The vast majority of students tend to go on to university, with most progressing straight from Sixth Form.
- A reasonable proportion of students decide to take a gap year before going on to university the following year.
- A very small number of students achieve a place on an apprenticeship as these courses are extremely competitive.
- Very few choose to go directly into employment, as there are a limited range of careers available without undertaking some form of further study.
- For this reason, we direct most of our support towards the university application process, although advice and guidance will also be available for the other routes.



# Benefits

- It is an opportunity for students to pursue the subject they love, working with real experts in their chosen field to develop their knowledge and skills in areas of specialism relevant to their particular interests.
- Students will develop high level transferable skills, which will stand them in good stead in both their personal life and future careers. Regardless of the specific subject they study, students will learn to think critically, question assumptions, conduct research and process large amounts of information.
- University is essential for pursuing many career paths. There are a small number of professions that require certain degrees, such as Medicine or Veterinary Science. Equally, there are many other careers that do not need a specific degree but are only open to graduates.
- There is data to suggest that graduates earn more money over the course of their careers. For example, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) estimate that graduates earn 35% more than school leavers, although there are numerous contextual factors that affect this figure.
- University offers students plenty of time to increase their employability by gaining additional work experience. The long holidays are a great time to apply for internships, organise work experience, or get a part-time job.
- It is a chance for students to broaden their minds by living in a different area of the country and meeting people from a diverse range of backgrounds.

# Downsides

- Many university courses do not equip students with job-specific technical skills. A small number of degrees do provide direct training, such as Medicine or Veterinary Science, whilst others are geared towards certain career paths, like Engineering. However, many degrees are not linked to particular jobs and do not include technical skills. This means that many graduates still have to do further study or workplace based training.
- Many students are surprised at how little contact time they have at university. In a recent survey, nearly two-thirds of students said they expected to have more contact hours at university than in sixth form. In reality, contact time is far less for many courses at university than students will be used to from school. For example, a third year History student may have as few as four hours of lectures and seminars per week.
- University is a big financial commitment and many graduates leave with significant debts. According to recent research, students leave with an average of £45,000 of debt. Fortunately, repayments are linked to earnings, meaning the debt is manageable and cost alone should not deter anyone from applying.
- University is also a major commitment of time, with degrees generally lasting a minimum of three years. This is a considerable amount of time to devote to one subject and may delay students from pursuing other opportunities, such as employment or travelling.
- There is not a guarantee of employment after completing a degree, with many students ending up in non-graduate jobs and others having to undertake postgraduate study in order to access graduate-level careers.

# School Advice

We advise all students to make a UCAS application, even if they are not certain they want to go to university. This ensures students are all guided through the process, standing them in good stead make applications in the future. It also allows students to keep their post-18 options open until much later in the course of Y13 and does not prevent them making other applications for jobs or apprenticeships at the same time.



# Application Process

## 1. Course

Start researching the courses available to decide which ones might be right for them.



## 2. University

Start researching universities to decide which ones might be right for them.



## 3. Apply

Apply to university by submitting a UCAS application. The early entry deadline is **15 October 2026**, whilst the main deadline will be in **January 2027**. A small number of courses, including Art Foundation and Conservatoire have separate application systems.

# Application Process

## 4. Assessment

Students applying to particular courses may be required to take a written assessment or entry exam. This is mostly applicable to those applying for Oxbridge, Medicine and Law. Most of these will take place in **October / November 2026.**



## 5. Interview

Some students may be invited to attend an interview. This is mostly applicable to those applying for Oxbridge, Medicine and some Creative Arts courses. Most Oxbridge interviews will take place in **December 2026.**



## 6. Offers

Universities take a holistic view of the available information to determine whether or not an offer is made. Some universities may make unconditional offers, but most will be conditional on students achieving particular grades. Universities begin making offers as soon as they receive applications.

# Application Process

## 7. Response

Once students have received decisions from all of their universities, they will need to select two offers to take forward. These are known as firm and insurance choices. The deadline for responding to most offers will be in **May 2027**.

## 8. Student Finance

Most students will apply for student finance. This can be used to cover the cost of tuition fees and support with living expenses. Student finance applications will open in **February 2027**, with a deadline in **May 2027** to guarantee receiving funds for the start of term.

## 9. Results Day

A Level results will be used by universities to confirm places. Those who have not met the conditions of either their firm or insurance choices will enter Clearing. Results Day will take place in **August 2027**.

# UCAS Applications

- In order to apply to a university in the UK, students need to complete a UCAS application.
- We will support them to register with UCAS and link their applications to the school with a separate briefing in **May 2026**.
- The early entry deadline for submitting UCAS applications is **15 October 2026**. This is applicable to students applying to Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science.
- The main deadline is in **January 2027**. However, we encourage all students to submit their applications as early as possible.
- We do this because universities begin making offers as soon as they start receiving applications. It also allows students to return their focus to schoolwork and achieving the best possible grades.
- A small number of courses, including Art Foundation and Conservatoires have separate application systems. **Students that are interested in these courses should notify their Head of Year as soon as possible.**

## UCAS Application

Personal Information

Course / University  
Choices

Personal Statement

Teacher Reference

Education /  
Qualifications

Predicted Grades

# Course / University Choices

- There are over 37,000 courses at approximately 130 universities in the UK, so students need to do their research.
- Students will need to put a total of five choices on their UCAS application. It is usually advisable to choose the same or similar courses at different universities, rather than five totally different courses.
- It is also advisable to make choices with a range of entry requirements. This gives the best chance of getting multiple offers and should ensure students get in somewhere, even if things do not go to plan on Results Day.
- There are a few limitations on choices. For example, students may only apply for Oxford or Cambridge. They may also only apply for four Medicine courses, although they can put down a fifth related choice, like Biomedical Science.

**1 x Aspirational Choice**  
(entry requirements slightly above targets / predictions)

**2 x Secure Choices**  
(entry requirements the same as targets / predictions)

**2 x Safe Choices**  
(entry requirements below targets / predictions)

# Course / University Choices

**How far away from home do you want to be?**

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

**How much is rental property?**

Are halls of residence guaranteed in first year?

**How much is there to do in the area?**

What sports teams & societies do they have?

**What is the cost of living in the area. E.g. taxis / food**

**What are the facilities like?**

# Course / University Choices

**How is the course assessed?**

How well regarded are the staff?

**Is there a year abroad or an industry placement?**

What are the module / option choices?

**How much do you enjoy the subject?**

**What are the graduate employment prospects?**

Is it a three or four year course?

# Personal Statement

- A new style of personal statement is being introduced for this application cycle. This is really a structural change and will not have a significant impact on the overall length of the personal statement or the type of content that will need to be included.
- Students may have seen reports stating that the personal statement is being abolished altogether, but this is not true and they must still take this aspect of the application seriously.
- The personal statement is a short reflective essay, written to persuade universities that students are suitable candidates for the courses and institutions that they have applied to.
- The personal statement is divided up into three sections, with each section having a specific question that students will need to answer.
- The personal statement may contain no more than 4,000 characters, including all letters, spaces and punctuation, and they must write a minimum of 350 characters in each section.
- We will support students in writing their personal statements with a separate briefing in **May 2026**. Form Tutors and subject specialist staff will also provide written feedback on draft versions.
- It is often the part of the application that creates the most workload and anxiety for students. However, it is also extremely important because it is only opportunity they have to differentiate themselves from other people applying for their courses, who are likely to be studying similar subjects and have similar predicted grades.

**Question 1:**  
**Why do you want to study  
this course or subject?**

**Question 2:**  
**How have your  
qualifications and studies  
helped you to prepare for  
this course or subject?**

**Question 3:**  
**What else have you done  
to prepare outside of  
education, and why are  
these experiences useful?**

# Teacher Reference

- The teacher reference is an extended piece of writing that gives contextual information on the school and provides an opportunity for staff to comment on students' attitude, motivation, skills, academic performance and wider experiences in support of their application.
- The teacher reference is divided up into three sections.
- The first is a generic statement giving details about the school, such as the composition of the student population, the types of courses on offer and the results achieved in recent years.
- The second section provides an opportunity to outline any extenuating circumstances that may have negatively impacted their education, such as significant health issues or personal challenges. This box does not need to be completed for all students.
- The final section is made up of a paragraph on each of the subjects students study, written by their subject teachers, which is designed to provide an endorsement of their academic ability.
- The teacher reference may contain no more than 4,000 characters, including all letters, spaces and punctuation.
- Students will be allowed to read the teacher reference before their application is sent.

<b>Establishment Details</b>
<b>Extenuating Circumstances *</b>
<b>Supportive Information *</b>

# Education / Qualifications

- Students will need to enter all of their GCSE grades onto the UCAS application. University courses do not generally have minimum grade requirements for GCSE, but they may look at them to validate predicted grades, indicate academic ability or judge progress over the course of Y12.
- Students will also need to enter their A Level subjects, leaving the grades as pending. This will allow the school to add predicted grades.
- If students have taken any AS qualifications, they will need to enter the grades for these onto the UCAS application. Internal assessments and examinations do not need to be entered.
- Students can also enter other qualifications, such as Duke of Edinburgh, music grades, summer schools, qualifications in native languages and other accredited courses. Many of these courses are worth UCAS points.



# Predicted Grades

- These are predictions made by the school that go on the UCAS application and provide universities with an indication of whether students are likely to meet the entry requirements.
- Predicted grades will be based primarily on a combination of ALPS target grades, results of the exams and holistic predictions made by subject teachers.
- For the purposes of UCAS, students will be predicted whatever is highest for each subject out of these pieces of data.
- Targets have already been communicated to students and parents / carers.
- Mock exams are due to take place in April and a further set will be completed in November. Results of these mock exams and holistic predictions will be published to students and parents / carers shortly after.
- If students are confused or unhappy with their predicted grades, there will be a process for discussing these, which will be explained to in more detail in July. The tone of these conversations should be mature, calm and respectful.
- In the meantime, students should use the ALPS target grades they were given at the start of Y12 as an indicator of what their predicted grades are likely to be.

**Target Grades:** Indication of the grades students should be able to achieve based on an them making average progress over the course of Sixth Form compared to students with a similar GCSE profile nationally

**Mock Results:** The grades students receive for the mock exams scheduled to take place in April / November

**Predicted Grades:** Holistic predictions made by subject teachers of the grades students are realistically on track for, made following the mock exams in April / November.

# Admissions Tests

- Students applying to particular courses may be required to take an entry exam.
- This is mostly applicable to those applying for Oxbridge, Medicine and Law, but there are exceptions, so they should check the course pages of their chosen universities to see if this applies.
- The vast majority of admissions tests are conducted online and must be completed at specialist test centres. This means the school is not in a position to administer admissions tests and students will instead need to make their own arrangements for registering and attending their assessments.
- We will write to parents / carers in **August 2026** with further details of how to find a test centre and register.
- Students are welcome to ask subject teachers for support in preparing the entry exams, but there is not a specific programme of support. Students will find resources online to help them practice.
- The registration deadline for the majority of entry exams is **September 2026** and most will take in **October 2026**.
- It is the responsibility of students to determine whether or not they need to sit an admissions test.

## Most Common Entry Exams

- TMUA (Mathematics / Economics / Computer Science)
- TARA (History / Psychology / Philosophy)
- LNAT (Law)
- UCAT (Medicine)
- ESAT (Engineering)

# Interviews

- Some students may be invited to attend an interview.
- This is mostly applicable to those applying for Oxbridge, Medicine and some Creative Arts courses.
- Most Oxbridge interviews will take place in **December 2026**, whilst interviews for other institutions are held at various time throughout the year.
- If students are invited to interview, they should inform their Head of Year as soon as possible and we will organise at least one practice interview.



# School Support

University & Careers Insight Day in **November 2025**

Higher Education Evening for parents in **February 2026** and Tutor Time focus for students

Trip to the UCAS Exhibition in **April 2026**

Trained Careers Advisors available for individual meetings

Personal Statement Briefing to students in **May 2026** and feedback on drafts from Form Tutors

Student Finance Briefing for students in **February 2027**

**What support will the school provide?**

UCAS Registration Briefing to students in **July 2026**

Practice interviews for those that are invited

Authorised absences to visit universities

Specialist Oxbridge Programme

High quality teacher references

Guidance on how to book entry exams

# Next Steps

## Research course / university choices

Students should start researching their course / university choices as soon as possible. They should start by considering the questions shown earlier in the presentation. Students can also look at course pages on university websites, read course guides on the UCAS website, use the Whatuni website as a search tool and go to university open days or taster days.

### Prepare for writing personal statement

Students do not need to start writing their personal statement yet, but they can prepare by making sure they have gathered the relevant experiences to write about. This includes work experience, volunteering and reading around their chosen subject.

**What should next steps be to prepare for students applying to university?**

### Maximise academic progress

The success of university applications is primarily dependent on academic performance. Students must try to maximise their progress by attending lessons, completing homework, carrying out independent learning, revising for assessments and communicating clearly with their teachers.

# Key Dates

Date	Event
May 2026	Personal Statement Briefing
May 2026	UCAS Registration Briefing
September 2026	Registration deadline for most entry exams
15 October 2026	UCAS early entry deadline
November 2026	Most entry exams take place
December 2026	Oxbridge interviews take place
January 2027	UCAS deadline
February 2027	Student finance applications open
May 2027	Deadline for responding to most university offers
May 2027	Student finance application deadline
August 2027	A Level Results Day and confirmation of university places

# Questions?

