



**Great Marlow School**

*Excellence • Compassion • Integrity*

# MOVING ON



## THE NEXT STEPS



YOUR GUIDE TO HIGHER EDUCATION,  
APPRENTICESHIPS AND CAREERS  
OR TAKING A GAP YEAR

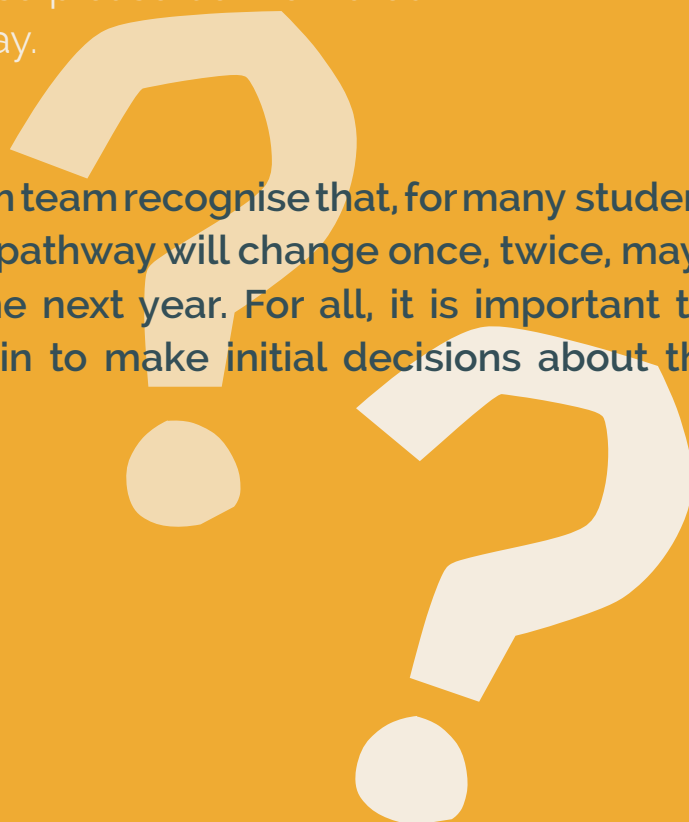
# What next?

This booklet is an essential tool for preparing students for the time after leaving Great Marlow, whether applying for university, an apprenticeship, a higher technical qualification, a job or taking a gap year.

The booklet is divided into different sections. However, some sections do overlap. For example, there may be some helpful tips in the UCAS section on personal statements for those applying for a job, because employers require something similar when a job is applied for.

A wealth of further information is available on all the topics included in this booklet, so please be motivated to research your chosen pathway.

The Sixth Form team recognise that, for many students, the choice of pathway will change once, twice, maybe more, over the next year. For all, it is important that students begin to make initial decisions about their future.



# CHOICES, CHOICES

IT IS ONCE AGAIN DECISION TIME, AND  
HERE ARE YOUR POSSIBILITIES:

## UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE

- • gain valuable skills and a qualification to help you follow your chosen career.

## APPRENTICESHIPS TRAINING

- • prepare for the world of work, or learn on the job while you work.

## WORK

- • apply for jobs now, or start your own business, with the aim to work up to your future goals.








## VOLUNTEERING

- • gain experience to help you towards your work or study aspirations.

## TRAVEL

- • acquire cultural insights during working holidays, learning, conservation or teaching.

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# UNIFROG

Unifrog is the complete destinations platform, a one-stop-shop for whole-school careers' guidance. Unifrog's mission is to level the playing field when it comes to young people finding the best opportunities for them.

# HOW CAN UNIFROG HELP ME?

## UNIFROG HELPS YOU MAKE THE BEST CHOICES

ALL YOUR DATA  
IS SECURELY  
PROTECTED. YOU  
WILL CREATE  
YOUR UNIQUE LOG-  
IN NAME AND  
PASSWORD WHEN YOU  
SIGN UP.

Unifrog brings into one place every apprenticeship, university course and college course in the UK, as well as career opportunities, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and School Leaver Programmes.

The aim is to bring all the available information into a single, impartial, user-friendly platform that helps you to make the best choices, and submit the strongest applications.

The platform makes it easy for you to write your CVs and personal statements and record your key skills. Teachers can give you feedback, and write references.

The Sixth Form team will help you with the whole signing up process and how you manage the Unifrog site once you have logged in.

## Where does Unifrog's data come from?

Lots of places. This includes The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), the National Apprenticeships Service, The National Careers Service, Unistats, Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), The Guardian, Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), the Cabinet Office, the Office for National Statistics, the Commission for Employment and Skills, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, Ofsted, every UK university, UK university alumni, FutureLearn, Coursera, Udacity, every college at Oxford and Cambridge, and Quantum Status (QS). All the data is bang up to date - for example, apprenticeships vacancies are updated every night.

unifrog

# UCAS

UCAS is the organisation responsible for managing applications to higher education courses in the UK.

**IT IS THE ONLY WAY OF APPLYING.**

# U

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# tuition fees

Many of you may, currently, be cautious about applying to university because of tuition fees. Hopefully, these basic facts will help make the situation clearer.

All institutions are currently allowed to charge a tuition fee for the courses they run, providing they make provisions of bursaries for disadvantaged students.

## STUDENTS DO NOT HAVE TO PAY THIS UP-FRONT

Students can receive a **TUITION FEE LOAN**, which will be paid directly to the university or college. Repayment for this loan does not start until earnings are at least £28,470 a year (or £2,372 a month/£547.50 a week).

Students do not have to take the loan for tuition fees; it can be paid for directly.

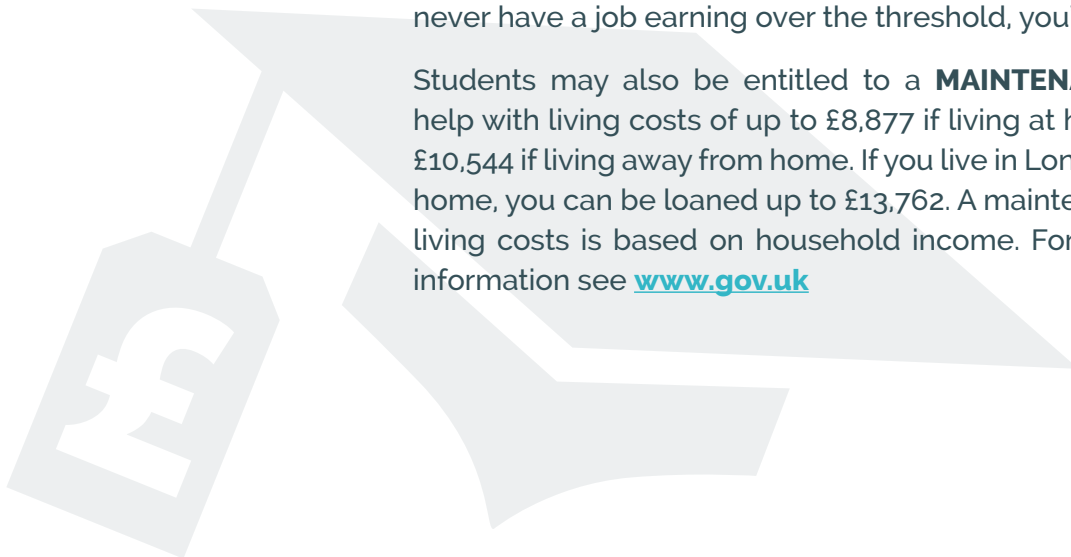
The loan is repaid through the income tax system; an employer takes a specified amount at source, reducing the take-home pay of the employee; this ensures no debt collectors come chasing.

The current threshold is £28,470. The threshold is designed to rise in line with average earnings. Students will be expected to repay 9% of everything above that threshold.

Students repay 9% of everything earned annually above £27,295 but should circumstances change, like redundancy or a pay cut, the repayments drop accordingly. You can make additional voluntary payments at any time, see [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) for information.

Students stop paying the loan when they have cleared the debt or 30 years have lapsed, whichever comes first. Therefore, if you never have a job earning over the threshold, you'll never repay.

Students may also be entitled to a **MAINTENANCE LOAN** to help with living costs of up to £8,877 if living at home and up to £10,544 if living away from home. If you live in London, away from home, you can be loaned up to £13,762. A maintenance Loan for living costs is based on household income. For more detailed information see [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)





# WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

## UCAS APPLICATIONS CALENDAR 2025-2026

THE EARLIER  
YOU SEND IN  
YOUR UCAS  
APPLICATION,  
THE MORE  
LIKELY IT IS  
THAT YOU  
WILL RECEIVE  
AN OFFER

### BY THE END OF THE SUMMER TERM:

- • you should have decided on the subject area you wish to study.

If you have no idea what to study:

book a careers interview, see Mr Hollyman, Mrs Brunt, Miss Jones or Mrs Evans

Speak to your tutor

access the websites in this pack

- • You should have attended/ plan to attend university open days and appropriate summer schools.

Go to - [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com) where you will find all the dates you need to know (3 days absence from school is allowed to attend open days for colleges and universities).

- • You should have prepared your personal statement and had it checked by your tutor.

- • You should have registered for UCAS.

Details of how to register is documented in this booklet, alternatively, ask your tutor.

- • You should have arranged any further necessary work experience.

Work experience is especially important if applying for teaching, medicine, veterinary science or physiotherapy, but it is also useful for all other courses, to show evidence of enthusiasm.



# important dates

**DO NOT LEAVE IT TO THE LAST MINUTE!**

2nd September 2025	applications can be submitted from this date
18th September 2025 - GMS Oxbridge deadline	.. for tutors to receive applications from those applying to Oxford, Cambridge, medicine, dentistry, veterinary science and law courses requiring The Law National Aptitude Test (LNAT). T.
6pm, 15th October 2025 - UCAS deadline	.. for applications for Oxford, Cambridge, medicine, dentistry and veterinary science.
23rd October 2025 (half-term) - GMS internal deadline	.. for all UCAS applications. This gives tutors time to write references and meet UCAS deadlines.
October/November 2025- March 2026 - university interviews continue, offers are made by universities	..track your offers on 'UCAS Apply'.
14th January 2025 6pm - UCAS final deadline	<b>.. for receipt of all applications.</b>
26th February 2025 - UCAS Extra	..students who made their 5 choices but are without any offers can add additional choices to their applications to try to secure a university place. See UCAS.ac.uk
March 2026 - Financial Support Application Form open	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance">www.gov.uk/studentfinance</a>
End of April 2026	..deadline for the Financial Support Forms to be returned.
16th May 2026	..final date to submit 'Final Statement of Decision' to UCAS. (Choose offers from two universities: one firm choice, one insurance choice. KEEP AN EYE ON DATES ON UCAS WEBSITE.
June – July 2026	..UCAS send clearing documentation to students without an offer. Keep all documents in a safe place.
August 2026	..remaining vacancies are filled through UCAS Clearing and UCAS Extra. 31st August – adjustment ends.
September 2026	University course begins.

# CHOOSING HIGHER EDUCATION

1

Decide on the subject area you wish to apply for – refer to the list below for help, if you have no idea.

- [www.unifrog.org](http://www.unifrog.org)
- [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) - UCAS course search
- [www.discoveruni.gov.uk](http://www.discoveruni.gov.uk)
- [www.amazingapprenticeships.com](http://www.amazingapprenticeships.com)
- [www.ukcoursefinder.com](http://www.ukcoursefinder.com)
- [www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)
- [www.merlinhelpsstudents.com](http://www.merlinhelpsstudents.com)

Arrange for an appointment with Mrs Maggie Brunt, the school's Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) advisor.

**REMEMBER to focus on the subject areas that you enjoy and find interesting.**

2

Compile a list of course titles to be considered together with the relevant universities. To do this use:

- the UCAS website – [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)
- university prospectuses/ websites

**REMEMBER to be realistic about the grades you are likely to achieve. Also, consider the location of the university campus or city/town as well as the geographic location.**

3

Produce a "short list" of course titles and universities.

This step will require more thorough research:

- Use university prospectuses and websites.
- Visit the universities you are interesting in.
- Phone or email university admissions tutors – it's well worth doing.

**REMEMBER that each university can provide graduate destination information. Find out about sporting activities, clubs etc as well as accommodation.**

4

Decide upon a final list of 5 courses for your UCAS application, this will cost you £28.50.

**REMEMBER a university course is 3 or 4 years long, so it is worth spending the time choosing the right course in the right university.**



Attend university open days, ask questions and take photographs: visit [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com). Next, narrow the field to two: a first choice and an insurance offer (this is a course that requires lower grades).

## USEFUL HIGHER EDUCATION WEBSITES

<a href="http://www.ucas.com">www.ucas.com</a>	is essential viewing for all higher education courses and application procedures
<a href="http://www.thecompleteuniversity-guide.co.uk">www.thecompleteuniversity-guide.co.uk</a>	gives comprehensive information on all aspects of UCAS for students, parents and carers, covering courses and finance
<a href="http://www.thebigchoice.com">www.thebigchoice.com</a>	gives an overview of universities and courses
<a href="http://www.push.co.uk">www.push.co.uk</a>	is a user-friendly guide to university choice
<a href="http://www.ukcoursefinder.com">www.ukcoursefinder.com</a>	is a free on-line test, which suggests possible degree courses to match an applicant's interests
<a href="http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk">www.thestudentroom.co.uk</a>	is a student forum offering information and discussion about university and the application's procedure
<a href="http://www.ucat.ac.uk">www.ucat.ac.uk</a>	UCAT is the way to apply online to sit the UK clinical aptitude test for medicine and dentistry
<a href="http://www.amazingapprenticeships.com/">www.amazingapprenticeships.com/</a>	Amazing Apprenticeships is a leading organisation in the education sector.
<a href="http://discoveruni.gov.uk">discoveruni.gov.uk</a>	where you can find out how to get the most out of the wealth of information available on Discover Uni.
<a href="https://lnat.ac.uk/">https://lnat.ac.uk/</a>	is the way to apply online to sit the National Admissions Test required for most law schools
<a href="http://www.opendays.com">www.opendays.com</a>	documents when open days and taster courses are being run – search by college/university and month of visit
<a href="https://www.gov.uk/student-finance">https://www.gov.uk/student-finance</a>	gives information about finance and student loans, includes list of LEAs
<a href="http://www.slc.co.uk">www.slc.co.uk</a>	is the official site for the Students Loans Company
<a href="http://www.prospects.ac.uk">www.prospects.ac.uk</a>	is the UK official graduate careers website

Many national newspapers also produce university sections at key points in the year, certainly at results time and in September.

Keep a look out for them or visit these websites:

[www.thetimes.co.uk](http://www.thetimes.co.uk)  
[www.independent.co.uk](http://www.independent.co.uk)  
[www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)  
[www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)

# **UCAS** **points tariff**

To calculate your UCAS points total visit <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/entry-requirements/ucas-tariff-points>

**Be realistic with the calculation of the points**

(according to progress grades/  
mock exams)

End of Year 12:  
End of Year 13:

**The UCAS Tariff is the way points are allocated to post-16 qualifications. It is a mathematical calculation that changes every year.**

Consider whether, as an individual, there are any other UCAS points that could be used to boost the total, for example, those involved in Young Enterprise, Duke of Edinburgh etc.

\* Please note Art Foundation courses do not require application via UCAS. You should apply direct to colleges and provide a portfolio of work.

## QUICK SKILLS AUDIT

Working on your own, or with another student, identify the skills that you have, or have used and record them below.

Communication		Caring for others		Photography	
Numeracy		Negotiation		Cookery	
Using IT		Showing motivation		Public speaking	
Team working		Motivating others		Decorating	
Problem solving		Designing and making		Giving presentations	
Time management		First aid		Coping with new situations	
Planning		Driving		Analysing information	
Organising		Map reading		Repairing machines	

What do you do?	What skills do you use?
Hobbies and interests	
Subjects and courses	
Other: (sports, organisations, performances)	

# APPLYING TO HE

There are some important decisions to make in this process. Completing the tick boxes below will help to focus ideas.

## 1. Choice of course

I would like a course that:

- ☐ is the same or similar to one or more of my A-level subjects
- ☐ is related to an interest outside of my studies
- ☐ will provide me with preparation for a future career

## 2. Type of degree

The type of degree I would like to study for is:

- ☐ single honours – one subject only
- ☐ joint honours – two subjects, equal time spent on both
- ☐ combined honours – two or more subjects, proportion of each may vary
- ☐ modular – wide range of choice and flexibility
- ☐ sandwich/ placement – an organised period of time spent in industry or abroad
- ☐ Foundation
- ☐ Higher National Diploma (HND)

## 3. Place of study

Use the prospectuses to make sure that you are considering institutions that will suit you. Tick the boxes that apply to you:

- ☐ I would like to study at a large university
- ☐ I would like to study at a small university
- ☐ I would like to go to a campus university
- ☐ It is important to me to go to a university with a good reputation
- ☐ It is important that the department I go to within the university has a good reputation
- ☐ I would like to live in a city
- ☐ Graduate destinations from the university I go to are important to me
- ☐ Sporting facilities are important to me
- ☐ I want to go somewhere with an active students' union
- ☐ I want to go somewhere within reasonable distance from home
- ☐ I want to go somewhere far from home
- ☐ I want to study somewhere within daily travelling distance of home

## 4. Where to live

- ☐ I want to go somewhere where halls of residence are guaranteed for first year students
- ☐ I want to go somewhere where I can live independently, for example in a shared house
- ☐ I want to live somewhere where my meals are provided (catered)
- ☐ I want to live at home

Research is needed before completing this section. Go to [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) or individual university websites.

The universities I am considering are:

Name	Reason

Recalculate a points total using the prompts below.

The subjects being studied and the grades being aimed for are:		

The grades being predicted by teachers are:		

The following courses match my level of entry qualification (A-level grades or UCAS points total):

--

The courses being considered are:

University	Course Title	Standard Offer

# PERSONAL STATEMENTS

## YOU NEED TO KNOW..

UCAS has announced significant changes to the personal statement format for students applying to UK universities starting in 2025 for 2026 entry.

The traditional open-ended statement has been replaced with a structured set of three targeted questions. This new format aims to help applicants better showcase their academic drive, relevant experience, and unique qualities, making the application process more accessible and equitable.

Instead of one, single piece of text, applicants will now be asked to complete **three separate sections**,\* each with a different question for students to focus their writing on. The new questions are as follows:

- Why do you want to study this course or subject?
- How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?
- What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

\* See Page 17 for more info.

## GETTING NOTICED

The personal statement may be the only written work that the course tutor sees before making a decision: make sure it is organised and literate. Pay attention to **grammar, spelling and punctuation**. A statement filled with errors will give a negative impression of your writing ability and the effort you have made in applying. Your statement must be written in English.

## KEY POINTS

Explain **why you want to study the course** you are applying for. If you mention your personal interests and hobbies, try to link them to the **skills and experience** required by the course.

The personal statement could be used as the basis for an **interview**, so be prepared to answer questions on it.

Writing about yourself is probably not something you do very often, so you might need to practise writing in this particular style. It is a good idea to list your hobbies and achievements, before deciding upon the ones that **demonstrate your strongest skills** and personality.

## HOW DO I START?

- 1 Begin to record useful information for your personal statement as soon as possible; consult your National Record of Achievement, if you have one.
- 2 Ask somebody else about your achievements and strengths.
- 3 Do not minimise your achievements – mention them loudly and proudly.
- 4 Avoid beginning your statement with phrases like “I am applying for this course because...” You should endeavour to write to attract attention in the opening sentence.
- 5 **DO NOT LIE, OVEREXAGGERATE or PLAGIARISE!**
- 6 Use helpful websites for advice on writing your personal statement:  
[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)  
[www.studential.com](http://www.studential.com)



# How to write a personal statement



Always keep in mind the impression you want to make on your reader.

## TWO IMPORTANT THINGS TO INCLUDE IN A PERSONAL STATEMENT ARE:


### The reasons for applying for the course you've chosen

This is particularly important when you're applying for a subject that you have not studied before. Tell the university the reasons why the subject interests you, and include evidence to show you understand what is required by the course, eg if applying for psychology courses show that you know how scientific the subject is.

### The reasons why you're suitable for the course

Tell the university tutor about the skills and experience you have had that will help you to succeed on the course.

#### Make sure you think about:

- how your current or previous studies relate to the course(s) that you have chosen
  - any activities that demonstrate your interest in the course(s)
  - why you want to go to university or college
- 

### There are reasons why applications are unsuccessful

- The personal statement may not show sufficient understanding, relevance or knowledge about the course being applied for.
- The personal statement may not strongly support your desire to study your chosen degree or course.
- There may be a failure in demonstrating sufficient knowledge and interest in the subject in your personal statement.

It is important to show why you want to study the course and what you can bring to it - especially as admissions tutors compare applications for the same course.

- There may be competition for places on a popular course and the personal statement and experience documented is not as strong as other applicants.
- The application form (including personal statement, reference and predicted grades) does not evidence accurate understanding of, or motivation for, a subject.
- The personal statement does not express a strong enough interest in the subject area of choice.

# Applying to multiple courses

Remember that you only write one personal statement, which will be used for all your choices. Try not to mention a university or college by name, even if you're applying to only one place, because your personal statement cannot be changed if you apply to a different institution -later.

If you're applying for a joint degree you will need to explain why you are interested in both aspects of the joint programme.

If you're applying for different subjects or courses, you need to identify the common themes and skills that are relevant to your choices. For example, both mathematics and law are subjects where you have to think logically and apply rules. You may like both subjects because you enjoy solving problems, using theory, and natural or man-made laws to come to a correct conclusion.

If your chosen courses can't be linked by a common theme, think about your reasons for applying for such varied courses - it might be useful to speak to a careers adviser to get some guidance.

If you mention a subject in your personal statement and are applying for other courses, you may be asked by the university or college for additional information as to why you have done so.

## Attract Attention

Some statements start with quotes, some include jokes, and others set out to be unusual or eye-catching in other ways. Sometimes it works, but it might have the opposite effect to what you hoped. The admissions' officer may not share your sense of humour, so be careful when trying to make your opening statement stand out.

## THINGS TO DO, AND NOT TO DO, WHEN WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

**Do create a list of your ideas before attempting to write the real thing.**

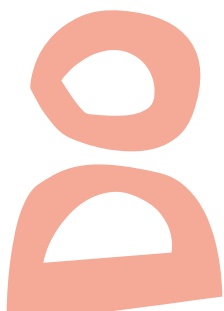
Do expect to produce several drafts before being totally happy.

**Do ask people you trust for their feedback.**

Do check university and college prospectuses, websites and entry profiles, as they usually tell you the criteria and qualities that they want their students to demonstrate.

**Do have a good ending. You want to leave the admissions tutor reading your personal statement with a strong lasting impression – one that will leave them no choice but to make you an offer (or invite you to an interview).**

Do be enthusiastic - if you show your interest in the course, it may help you secure a place.



**Don't feel that you need to use elaborate language. If you try too hard to impress with long words that you are not confident using, the focus of your writing may be lost.**

Don't say too much about things that are not relevant – redraft if you think that you have. Take a break and return to your statement when you feel more focused.

**Don't lie - if you exaggerate you may get caught out in the interview if asked to elaborate on an interesting achievement.**

Don't rely on a computer spell-checker as it will not correct all mistakes - proofread as many times as possible.

**Don't leave it to the last minute - your statement will appear rushed, and important information may be left out.**

Don't expect to be able to write your personal statement while watching TV or surfing the internet - this is your future.

Don't

## Deferred entry

Deferred entry means you request a place at university a year hence, following a gap year. Sometimes this deferred entry is used for travel or gaining work experience.

1

Give reasons for a deferred entry in the application.

2

Outline what the gap year will be used to do. Where possible, make the gap year relevant to your choice of degree, and show that you're keeping your mind active.

# LET'S GET STARTED

**Check out this website before you start**

<https://www.ucas.com/applying/applying-university/writing-your-personal-statement/2026-personal-statement-guides>

## The new personal statement questions

The three questions will help you to scaffold your answers and ensure you include exactly what universities and colleges want to see, to help you succeed in your applications. Each answer will have a minimum character count of 350 characters, which is clearly labelled on the question boxes, along with an overall character counter, so you can keep track. The **4000 overall character limit** (including spaces) remains the same, as does what you're expected to include.

## Question 1

### Why do you want to study this course or subject?

This is your opportunity to showcase your passion and knowledge of your chosen subject area and to demonstrate to universities and colleges why it's a good fit for you and your future ambitions.

Examples of what you might talk about here are:

#### Your motivations for studying this/these course(s)

Have you been inspired by a key role model or moment in your life? Maybe it's a subject you love and want to pursue further. We're all driven by something and it's important to talk about how yours has led you to this course or subject area.

#### Your knowledge of this subject area and interests

Perhaps there's a particular subject area you've researched and can't wait to learn more about. A book or subject expert doing great things that have sparked your interest? Universities and colleges want to see you have done your research so they can be confident this is something you will enjoy and excel in. This is a great place to highlight super-curricular activities as evidence of curiosity and interest in the subject outside of the classroom.

#### Your future plans and why this is a good fit for you

If you already have a particular profession in mind you could talk about how you'll use this to launch your career. If you don't, think about what's important to you and your future, and how the knowledge gained from your chosen course(s) will help you achieve this.

## Question 2

### How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

This is your chance to shout about the relevant or transferable skills you've gained from your formal education and highlight your understanding of how they will help you succeed in this subject area.

Examples of what you might talk about here are:

#### How your studies or training relate to your chosen course(s) or subject area

This could be current or previous studies within a school. The main thing here is to focus on what's most recent and relevant to your chosen course(s).

#### What relevant or transferable skills do you have that makes you a great candidate?

Maybe there are a couple of subjects that have helped you develop a core set of skills

required for your chosen course(s). Or, a particular module that helped you understand where your interests and strengths lie.

### **Any relevant educational achievements**

Universities and colleges will see your grades elsewhere on your application so don't waste time talking about these. Consider accomplishments like winning a school or national competition, serving as a student ambassador or team captain, or landing the lead role in a play.

## **Question 3**

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

This is your chance to talk about any other activities you have undertaken outside of your formal education or personal experiences which further demonstrate your suitability for the course. This section is likely to be highly personal to you and anything you do include should reflect on why you're including it.

Examples of what you might talk about here are:

#### **Work experience, employment, or volunteering**

Whether it's in-person work experience at your local school or virtual work experience through Springpod, or volunteering at a dog shelter, the key thing here is for you to reflect on your experiences and the skills gained relevant to your chosen course.

#### **Personal life experiences or responsibilities**

Is there a situation you've personally overcome that has influenced your decision? Are there responsibilities such as caring for a family member that has helped you develop essential qualities for the course like resilience and empathy?

#### **Hobbies and any extracurricular or outreach activities**

Think sports, reading, community work, summer schools – any activities outside of your studies that help further showcase why you'd make a great student.

#### **Achievements outside of school**

This could be a position of responsibility such as captain for your local club, a musical achievement, competition you won, or a qualification you've attained outside of the classroom.

#### **Post-education activities**

If you have chosen to take a gap year, and are applying after you have left school, it would be a good idea to detail your experiences and how they have equipped you with the skills and qualities for your desired course(s).

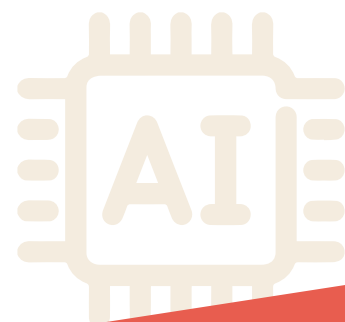
# AI and CHAT GPT

## USING AI AND CHATGPT WHEN WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT


Generating (and then copying, pasting and submitting) all or a large part of your personal statement from an AI tool such as ChatGPT, and presenting it as your own words, could be considered cheating by universities and colleges and could affect your chances of an offer.

When you complete your application, you now have to declare that your personal statement hasn't been copied or provided from another source, including artificial intelligence software.

As part of their responsibility to applicants and universities and colleges, the UCAS Verification Team run checks to detect fraudulent applications and patterns of similarity in personal statements.



**The personal statement is exactly that; personal. It is a chance to showcase your passion and research, and explain why you want to study a course.**



There are ways, however, that you could use ChatGPT as a tool to help inspire, clarify and articulate your own ideas, rather than asking it to write your entire personal statement for you.

Here are a few ways you could use AI to assist you:



### BRAINSTORM SOME IDEAS

You could use ChatGPT to give you ideas about topics that are relevant to your chosen subject, which you can then relate to your own experiences and opinions. Or you could ask it to list skills that are relevant to the course you're applying for, allowing you to think about your own talents and how to convey them.



### HELP WITH STRUCTURE

You may want to ask ChatGPT to suggest ways of structuring your personal statement. Our personal statement builder does something very similar.



### USE IT FOR CHECKING READABILITY

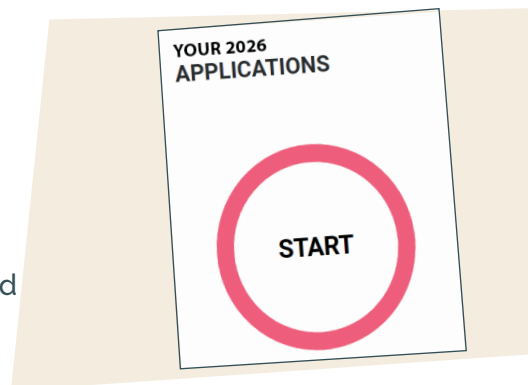
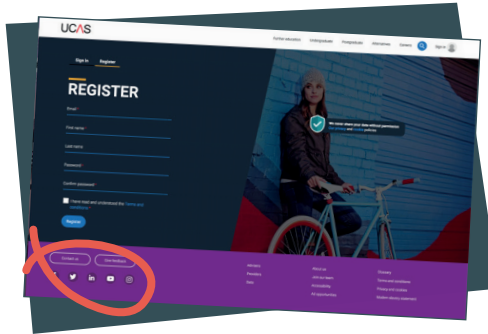
ChatGPT can be used to check your personal statement draft for readability. It may suggest ways to rephrase sentences to make them more concise, while maintaining their meaning.

# APPLYING TO UCAS FOR 2026

## General instructions for getting started

### Registration

- access [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)
- click on **Sign in** at the top right of the page (**go to students in the drop down menu**)
- click on **register**
- use personal email →
- then go to UCAS hub
- enter details
- select **Apply ( for year of entry)**
- select **undergraduate**
- fill in information
- read the information carefully before ticking the box **to accept** the terms and conditions.
- click **register**



# APPLYING to UCAS



Answer the initial UCAS questions: in response to 'How are you applying?' Select – **'through my school or college'**

**Enter the GMS buzzword: GMS2026**

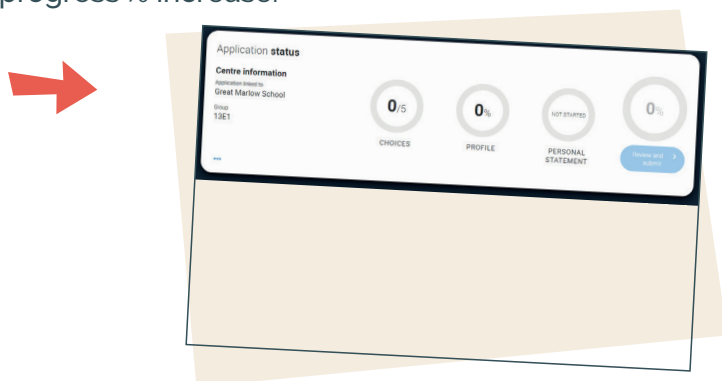
Once it has confirmed the school, you will be asked to select your tutor group.

**Follow these instructions to continue:**

If you wish to leave the form, **click on 'log out'**

You will be able to see your application progress via the hub each time. Fill details in gradually, not in a rush!

You will then complete each section separately and see your progress % increase.



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED

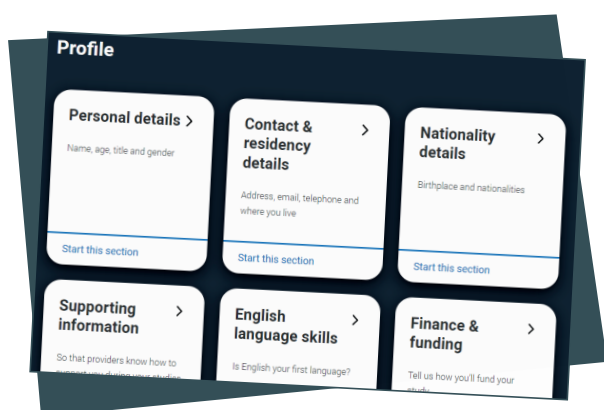
- equality, ethnic origin and national identity
- activities undertaken in preparation for higher education – taster courses, summer schools etc that you have attended
- parental education – this is used by the government to ensure that people from all backgrounds are encouraged to go into HE. If you are the first in your family, you may be entitled to more financial help
- occupational background – enter one parental occupation

## CHOICES

You have a maximum of 5 choices, but you can apply for fewer if you wish. There is no order of preference.

- Use dropdown menus to find institution codes, course codes, campus etc.
- Click the intended **entry start date**.
- Click 'yes' if you will be living at **home**

## FINANCE and FUNDING



- Select UK student finance services if you intend to apply for a student loan (most of you will).



## EDUCATION

- Choose 'Add new school/college' and name your secondary school.
- Enter qualifications centre as **below honours degree**. Centre number: 52435
- Use the help boxes to select correct qualification.
- Select GCSE to enter your GCSE grades (single subject GCSEs).
- Remember to put grades in for all exams taken, enter the correct exam board for each subject and save. Ask your subject teachers if you are unsure.
- If you studied Double Science, add qualifications to GCSE Double Award.
- Mark this section as complete.
- Choose 'Add new school/college' enter the name: Great Marlow School
- Add the qualifications yet to be gained there.
- Enter the module/unit title (eg GGA3 Geographical Skills) and the achieved grade – this must be completed for all subjects. **Check exact BTEC courses carefully with your teachers.**
- Add in any Key Skills qualifications.
- Add details of other examinations in music or drama, for example.
- Candidates must remember to enter the names of subjects being studied and the date. Leave the results as "pending" – NB unit titles are needed for this section.
- Add in details about Additional Admission Tests if you are taking LNAT, BMAT or UKCAT for instance.
- Point of entry -leave blank.

## EMPLOYMENT

Enter details of any paid employment – full or part-time.

## PERSONAL STATEMENT

Complete your personal statement in Word (minimum font size 12). "Apply" will only use plain type so there is no point in underlining, using bold or italics.

Use the spell-check to identify any errors and ask your tutor, Head of Sixth Form, or the Deputy Head of Sixth Form to check your statement.

Save it on the school drive, as well as at home.

# FINALLY

Copy and paste the finished statement into your "Apply" form, but only when your tutor is satisfied with it and tells you to do so.

## CHECKING

- Click on "View All". This will preview all the details entered so far in each section.
- Only send the application to your referee (your tutor) when you are sure you have thoroughly checked that all sections have been completed by you.



**...AND THAT IS  
YOUR APPLICATION  
COMPLETED!**

**THIS IS  
IMPORTANT**

**You have a maximum  
of 47 lines. Click save  
within 35 minutes  
or you will lose your  
work! Once you  
have saved it you  
can go back to your  
application at any  
time.**

# DEADLINES

Deadline to submit the form to your tutor is:

**THURSDAY 23rd OCTOBER 2025**

- Print out a copy of the application form and keep it safe for reference.
- Proceed to send the form to the referee by paying online by credit/debit card. You will be asked to enter the card details. Make sure you have permission if using a card belonging to parents or carers - £28.50.

Your tutor (referee) will now add their reference and the form will be sent to UCAS.



This process may take up to 20 working days.  
**Remember – the earlier you complete the whole process,  
the more likely you are to receive an offer**

**FINAL DEADLINE for GMS students to  
complete process:**

**Friday 5th December 2025**

**(EXCEPT OXBRIDGE/MEDICAL CANDIDATES  
15th October 2025)**

**For more info, go to [www.ucas.com/  
fillinginyourapplication](http://www.ucas.com/fillinginyourapplication)**

# HIGHER TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS

HTQs are technical qualifications that employers have helped develop so you can acquire the right training and skills you need to succeed at work. You can study an HTQ full time or part time.

# INTRODUCTION to HTQs

**HTQs are level 4 and 5 qualifications. They focus on high quality technical skills that are sector specific.**

HTQs are a quality mark. They have been approved against employer standards. Employers outline the skills they need and help develop the standards for HTQs. This means you can get the skills employers want.

HTQs are usually taught in the classroom and teach industry relevant practical skills. They provide a blend of academic and technical learning and projects.

## TYPES OF APPROVED HTQs

There are many different types of approved HTQs, such as:

- higher national diplomas (level 4)
- higher national certificates (level 5)
- foundation degrees (level 5)
- higher education diplomas (level 5)



**It takes 1 to 2 years to complete an HTQ, depending on the course you take.**

Not all diplomas, certificates and foundation degrees are approved HTQs. Look out for the HTQ logo or banner which always shows on approved qualifications.

## ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR HTQs

To start an HTQ, you'll need to be 18 or over and live in England. You can apply for an HTQ no matter what stage of education or employment you're in. This includes while you're still at school. The grades, qualifications or experience you'll need will depend on the course you apply for and the provider delivering the course.

**Check UCAS or contact the provider to find out the exact entry requirements you'll need.**

You might do a level 3 qualification before studying an HTQ. Level 3 qualifications include A-levels, T-levels, advanced apprenticeships, and BTECs.

# Subjects you can take

For September 2025, you can apply for an HTQ in a variety of different subjects across a wide range of sectors, including:

- digital
- construction, design and build
- health and science
- business and administration
- education and early years
- engineering and manufacturing
- legal, finance and accounting
- agriculture, environmental and animal care
- catering and hospitality
- creative and design
- care services
- protective services
- sales, marketing and procurement

You can view the [HTQ subjects available now and in the future](#).

Doing an HTQ in one of these sectors prepares you for specific roles such as cyber security specialist or nursing associate.

digital



creative



science



business

catering



## Qualifications you'll earn

You'll earn either a level 4 or 5 qualification depending on the course you take.

The qualification you'll get will have been approved by employers as giving you the knowledge and skills you need to work in that area.

You can see what the qualification levels mean on [GOV.UK](#).



# HOW TO FIND an HTQ

You can contact a university, college, Institute of Technology or training provider directly or use UCAS to search and apply for HTQ courses.

You're usually taught in a classroom at a college, university or an independent training provider.

## After your HTQ

After completing an HTQ, you could start work straight away or continue studying in **higher education**.



## Financial support for HTQs

Most universities and colleges charge a tuition fee to cover the cost of your course. They're likely to cost from around £7,000 to £9,250 a year.

You may be eligible for **funding from student finance**. It's available for both full time and part time courses and is the same support that's available for degrees and other types of higher education. The amount you could be allocated will depend on your circumstances and the type of HTQ you're studying.

## What Employers say about HTQs



Apprenticeships and HTQs challenge and develop new recruits to deliver high quality work, while continuously learning and developing skills.

Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) are an opportunity to grow talent and develop a motivated, skilled and qualified workforce.

"One of the obstacles of getting into the cybersecurity profession is experience. People gain qualifications, but then hit the barrier of no experience. The HTQ is practically focused and as such should enable the candidates to develop practical skills alongside the formal qualification."

Peter Loomes, Head of Training,  
The IASME Consortium



# APPRENTICESHIPS

An apprenticeship is a real job, consisting of a combined package of work and study, which will enable you to complete a relevant professional qualification whilst learning in the workplace.

# WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

**MAKING THE BEST CHOICE FOR YOU!**

**EARN WHILE YOU  
LEARN FROM  
ENGINEERING  
TO ACCOUNTING,  
CATERING TO  
TEACHING.**

An apprenticeship is a real job, consisting of a combined package of work and study; it will enable you to complete a relevant professional qualification whilst learning in the workplace. You'll be employed by a company from day one with a Contract of Employment, which will include a minimum work schedule of 30 hours a week, paid holiday and sickness benefits.

All apprenticeships last minimum of twelve months.

Typically you will have one day a week dedicated to learning and study.

## What levels are there?

Name	Level	Equivalent educational level
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes at grades A* to C
Advanced	3	2 A-level passes
Higher	4,5,6 and 7	Foundation degree and above

Apprenticeships are available at intermediate, advanced, higher and degree level.

There are no set entry requirements: these vary from programme to programme, depending on the sector, level of programme



and the occupational areas. Usually, employers will look for a combination of academic qualifications, skills, attributes and personal qualities, hence it's very important to research the apprenticeship you're interested in to see exactly what's needed.

What apprenticeships are most relevant when I finish Sixth Form?

Currently, there are apprenticeships offered in over 170 industries with 280 different types. After sixth form, students are most likely to be suited to higher or degree apprenticeships but there are no restrictions should you decide to apply for an Intermediate or Advanced Apprenticeship in an occupational field unrelated to you're A-level or BTEC studies.

Degree apprenticeships are a growing area. Big companies like Rolls Royce, GlaxoSmithKline, Goldman Sachs and BAE Systems offer degree apprenticeships, but you'll also find smaller companies offering them.

## How do I apply for apprenticeship?

Unlike applying to university, there is no streamlined application process or fixed deadline when it comes to apprenticeships, so you need to be prepared to start your research early and invest considerable time. Vacancies appear throughout the year, so it is worth registering for alerts on a number of websites (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship> being the core one) to hear about vacancies as they appear.

### WHAT ARE APPRENTICES PAID?

The government each year specifies a minimum wage that employers must pay their apprentices. This rate applies to Apprentices aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19 and over, who are in their first year. The 2025 rate is £7.55 per hour.

Although it varies between sectors, many employers pay considerably higher. For more information go to Rate my Apprenticeship.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM SUITED TO TAKING A HIGHER OR DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP?

Whilst apprenticeships can be an attractive alternative to higher education, there are a number of things to consider at the research stage:

- Do you clearly have a particular interest in the area of work you're applying for? Most importantly, can demonstrate this from previous experience, whether it be volunteering, work experience or contributions in school?
- You'll be starting a challenging job and establishing yourself in the workplace, whilst commencing studies for a professional qualification or degree.
- You will be expected to achieve academically and at work, working full-time hours with fewer holidays than friends who are at university.
- Length of the programme; sometimes a Higher Apprenticeship can lead onto a degree but this may not be guaranteed. Do you know what you are committing yourself to? A degree programme will usually last between 3 to 6 years study.

# Top tips for applications

- Big companies may offer 'Insight' or 'Experience' days to tell you about their company culture and sector which are invaluable preparation prior to making a job application
- As a general rule, larger companies plan one year ahead and so will effectively mirror the UCAS cycle ie initial contacts will start to be made in the summer with vacancies appearing in the autumn, but the majority pop up from January or February onwards.
- Smaller businesses may start recruiting only a month or two before the job starts, so if you hope to start work in September, you should start looking from Easter onwards. Do check start dates closely, to make sure you'll have finished school.
- Don't wait until the deadline to make an application, some companies close their recruitment process as soon as they have sufficient candidates.

## WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT FROM THE SELECTION PROCESS?

There are usually a number of hurdles or stages to get through so that the employer can assess whether you have the relevant skills and qualities they are looking for. Typically, you may have to complete an application form, online tests, perhaps a phone or online interview, before being invited to an assessment day. This will include individual and group tasks, possibly psychometric tests and definitely either a one to one or panel interview. Smaller organisations tend to have a less complex and more personal process.

## FURTHER HELP

To support you in developing the necessary skills and techniques to succeed in these rigorous selection processes, GMS runs workshops in collaboration with employers to prepare students. To register your interest for forthcoming events please contact **Mrs Maggie Brunt - Careers Lead**.

Be aware that many apprenticeship schemes may require you to have good passes in GCSE Maths and English. Depending on these grades, you may or may not have to take some literacy and numeracy tests.

## Useful websites

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

[www.ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk](http://www.ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk)

[www.apprenticeshipguide.co.uk](http://www.apprenticeshipguide.co.uk)

[www.notgoingtouni.co.uk](http://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk)

<https://careers-world.com/>

[www.futuretalentlearning.com/apprenticeship-programmes](http://www.futuretalentlearning.com/apprenticeship-programmes)

[www.amazingapprenticeships.com/](http://www.amazingapprenticeships.com/)



Many of the job search websites are also extremely useful.

# JOBS & CVs

If you are certain that you do not want to apply to HE through UCAS, then this section will help you think about what sort of job you may wish to apply for.

# OTHER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

THOSE APPLYING THROUGH UCAS MAY ALSO FIND THIS SECTION USEFUL.

IF YOU ARE CERTAIN THAT YOU DO NOT WANT TO APPLY TO HE THROUGH UCAS, THEN THIS SECTION WILL HELP YOU DECIDE.

We will be looking at:

- CV – what is it, writing it
- Personal information and skills
- What to include
- Matching your data to the job
- Example CVs
- Interview techniques

## Writing a good CV

When applying for a job you will be required to send in a CV and/or covering letter.

Follow these simple tips to ensure that your CV stands out from all the other applicants.

### TOP FIVE CV TIPS

Your CV is your personal brochure, giving you a chance to show off all the attributes that make you the perfect choice for employers. These tips inform you of the key things you need to consider to ensure your CV shows you in the best light.



**Show what makes you unique.**

For every job you apply for you could be up against hundreds of other candidates. It is important to ensure

your CV stands out. Employers don't just buy skills; they buy solutions, so research the place offering employment. Perhaps, show how can you make the company money or how can you solve the problems that they have.

2

### **Choose a clear layout.**

Employers spend around 20 to 30 seconds scanning a CV so it needs to remain clutter-free and easy to read. The last thing a recruiter wants to do is hunt for the information that they are looking for, so don't hide it amongst an array of elaborate graphics.

3

### **Tailor your CV to your audience.**

It may sound like a time consuming process, but make the effort to tailor your CV to suit the requirements of each particular job that you apply for: it can greatly increase your chances of securing an interview.

4

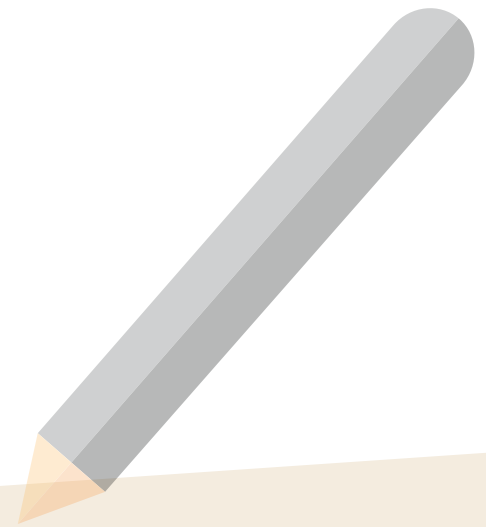
### **Keep the CV error free.**

It's deceptively easy to make mistakes on your CV and exceptionally difficult to repair the damage once an employer has it. As well as checking your spelling and grammar, make sure your employment dates match up and that you've provided the right phone number and email address.

5

### **Keep your CV up-to-date.**

When you put together a CV it is often difficult to remember the projects you have been involved in and the achievements you have made. To avoid missing important pieces of information, revisit your CV every month adding anything of importance, and cutting out any information that is no longer required.



## **WHAT TO INCLUDE ON A CV**

There is no set format. How you present your CV is up to you. However, you should include, at the very least, the following:

- **your name**
- **your address**
- **your phone number**
- **your email address**
- **your career history**



Put your most recent job first and include dates. Employers will be more interested in what you have done recently. Don't leave any gap between occupations, because employers will want to know what you did during those periods.

If you don't have much work experience, you could include temporary, holiday, part-time or voluntary jobs. If you've had many different jobs, emphasise the skills and experience you have acquired, for example, dealing with customers or communication skills.

The following gives ideas about what to include:

## PERSONAL PROFILE

This is a short statement at the beginning of your CV to sell yourself, to show off the skills, experience and personal qualities you have. You could include positive words such as 'competent', 'adaptable', and 'conscientious'.

Tailor the statement to the requirements of the job being applied for. Make it clear to the employer that you're the right person for the job.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Ensure you write about the achievements of your previous jobs; what you did well and how the skills acquired are relevant to the job you are applying for.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

Include any qualifications and training acquired from previous jobs (for example, training in health and safety or a certificate in food hygiene). Put the most recent first, and include the qualifications you achieved at school or college.

## INTERESTS

These can support your application if your hobbies and leisure activities highlight responsibilities and skills that are relevant to the job you're applying for. Perhaps, you have organised activities for a club or society. Perhaps, you have developed leadership skills or teamwork skills from being a key member of the organisation.

## OTHER INFORMATION

It is an individual's choice whether to include extra information. It is helpful to do so if there are gaps in your CV. If you had a career break because you were caring for children or elderly relatives, make this a positive experience. Think about the skills you acquired. If the job you're applying for is different from what you've done in the past, explain why you're interested in the new type of work.

# DID YOU KNOW?

You don't need to include your date of birth.

Laws on age discrimination mean that you **do not need** to put your date of birth, or your age, on your CV.

Ask a friend or relative to read through your CV, to make sure it's accurate and shows off the skills you have in a positive way.

## REFERENCES

It is best to have two or more people who can provide a work or personal reference. Ideally, one should be your most recent employer. If you have not worked for a while it could be someone who has known you for a long time. It should be someone who can comment on your qualities in relation to the job. You should ask the person to agree to this beforehand.



## What do recruiters dislike seeing on a CV?

The Internet has changed the focus of a job search and just because your CV looks nice on paper, it doesn't mean it's nice on a computer.

With stacks of CVs arriving in hiring managers' inboxes every day they, very quickly, grow to loath some of the things they see. If you don't want your CV to be discarded, take heed to avoid the following:

- **Spelling errors and poor grammar** – it is important to write correctly: you lose so much when it is wrong. Check every word, then double check it. Before you send it off, check it again. Read your CV out loud to uncover any grammatical discrepancies.
- **Too duty-oriented** - if you find yourself copying the job description into your CV, you are missing the point. Recruiters already know what the job is; your CV should highlight what you've achieved and what you can offer to the job being advertised.
- **Inaccurate dates** - recruiters need to know where you worked and when, because they want to understand your working history; they use the dates to run background checks. Missing dates, especially for long periods of time, could send up a red flag. Include specific ranges in months and years for every position. If you have gaps, explain them in the CV or in an accompanying cover letter.
- **Inaccurate contact information** – a CV is created for one reason, to get a response. How can someone contact you if the phone number is missing a digit or your email address is incorrect? Recruiters will not look you up; they'll move on to the next candidate.
- **Poor formatting** - different typefaces and boxes may look nice on paper, but as your CV goes through various email formats and IT packages, it can get distorted. If you want everyone to see your CV in the same format, keep it in plain text.
- **Long paragraphs** - employers generally don't have the time to read them. Focus on the skills and accomplishments that directly apply to the job you are applying for. Use snappy bullet points because every word counts. Avoid dwelling on the specifics of each job; instead highlight specific points that will help the recruiter to select you for interview.
- **Unqualified candidates** - you may want the job, but if you do not show you have the skills and experience required, recruiters will feel you are wasting their time. If you think you have the skills and expertise required, make sure you make it obvious by drawing attention to how your qualifications match key points in the job description and write them at the top of the document.



- **Information unrelated to the job** - recruiters spend limited time on each CV, therefore, it is important not to distract them with details of age, height, weight and interests unless they are directly related to the work being applied for. Spend time making a link between what a recruiter needs and what you bring to the table. The hobbies and interests section is valid, but don't let it dominate.

## The length of a good CV

You are not writing an autobiography. It is a curriculum vitae and it's meant to be an overview! A one-page CV, if it is feasible, is recommended. Some recruitment agencies, especially head-hunters, may insist on a one-page CV.

Failing that, two pages are entirely acceptable. In certain circumstances, it may be acceptable for a CV to run to three pages, for example, a medical CV would need to document multiple qualifications and experience so show academic and clinical experience.

Some believe that a one-page CV is worth less than two-pages, but this is definitely not true. It is much better to have a good, strong one-page CV than two-pages that are padded out with

unnecessary information. Aim to exclude irrelevant information, which may detract the reader from other, more important, points.

Often a CV, which has been spread out over two pages can, with a little careful tweaking, be made to fit onto one page – and this tends to have greater impact. It is, of course, important not to force a CV unnecessarily onto one page when two pages would be better but a 1½ page CV tends to look incomplete and weak.

Summary: if a finished CV is longer than two pages it is important to keep working on it until it has been reduced it to the standard two pages. The only exception to this rule is the special case outlined above.

**If the CV requires to be shortened consider:**

- removing some of the less important points you've made
- finding ways to communicate the same points more concisely
- ruthlessly eliminating all unnecessary words and phrases
- axing non-essential sections, for example your Objectives
- placing your interests and activities under Other Details
- changing the design and page layout to create more space
- editing, rewriting, polishing and perfecting until it fits

Regardless of the length, do make sure that all the most important information is conveyed on the first page or, for a one-page CV, in the top half of the page: sadly, too many recruiters simply do not bother to look any further.



# COVERING LETTERS

## INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN A COVER LETTER

In the days when all applications were sent by post, the cover letter was the first chance you had to 'wow' a prospective employer. Now, the process is largely electronic based, but nothing has really changed.

Whether you're emailing your application or submitting it through a job search web account, you have the chance to write a few choice words that will entice your reader to take a detailed look through your CV.

### At the beginning

Address your reader – if you know their name always put "Dear Mr Bloggs" rather than "Dear Joe" as over-familiarity at this early stage might suggest an unprofessional attitude.

The first sentence should clearly state your intention to apply for the job. Recruiters are often covering many vacancies at one time and may be confused as to which applicant is applying for which job. Include any reference numbers provided to make the task easy for them.

Reference how your aptitude will enable you to do the job successfully. But remember, your cover letter is not your autobiography – the main bulk of your experience and abilities should be listed on your CV. The focus of a cover letter is to highlight how you meet an employer's needs: avoid the perception of being self-important.

From the advertisement, pick the main responsibility the recruiter is looking for in the role and give an example of how and why you are the person for the job. "My experience of managing network support engineers will help to ensure the smooth running of your computer systems to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your business." This is an example of a skill that can be transferred to a new role.

### Watch the length

Two short paragraphs may be all that's needed to sell yourself. You should to be as punchy as possible, as your reader will probably be a very busy person with limited time to trawl through a long letter. Concise and compelling is the way forward.

You may want to include a 'next step' for your reader, such as, "To see how I could take your marketing to the next level, look at my CV to see the achievements I have had during my time with ABC Widgets." This clearly points the employer to the part of your CV you think will persuade them to give you the job.

If you're applying to a number of similar positions, the chances are you're tweaking one letter and using it for multiple openings. That's fine, as long as you are customising each one. Don't forget to update the company, job and contact information - if Mr. Jones is addressed as Mrs. Smith, your application will go straight into the bin.

Be sure to include your contact details so they can contact you when they need to. This information should also be on your CV, but there's no harm doubling up.

## OTHER COVERING LETTER ADVICE

**Length** - A covering letter should, ideally, be no longer than one side of A4.

**Format** - Your letter should be laid out using a business format – if you're not sure how to do this, take a look at the last "official" letter you received! Letters that are aligned to the left-hand margin and with open punctuation are easy to put together but this is not the only way to do it. Using indents and full punctuation can look effective too.

**Typed** - Most recruiters prefer a clear, well-typed letter. However, the letter could be hand-written if your handwriting is very clear and legible.

**Spelling** - If you are typing a covering letter, make sure you set the computer to the English spell-checker. Ask a friend to read the letter to make sure what you have written makes sense.

**Paper** - Covering letters are usually photocopied so it is best to use A4 paper. Do not staple the CV to the back of the letter – use a new paperclip instead. Use the same type of paper for your covering letter as your CV – it looks more professional.

**Dear...?** - Ideally, the letter should be addressed to a person rather than "Sir/Madam". If you only know the person's job title, call the office and ask for their full name – they may be impressed that you took the trouble to find out!

If you begin with **Dear Mr Smith**, end with **Yours sincerely**,

If you begin with **Dear Sir/Madam**, end with **Yours faithfully**,

**Don't forget to tell the employer:**

- who you are
- what you are applying for and where you saw it advertised
- why you want the job and why you are attracted to the organisation
- how your qualifications and experience make you suitable

## HOW TO START AND END YOUR LETTER

Some people struggle when it comes to the right words to start and finish a covering letter. What is important is that you sound polite, interested and enthusiastic.

You could start with any of the following lines:

- I am writing with regard to ...
- Please find enclosed ...
- Having recently attended ...

The way you finish your letter is like a written handshake. You need to be positive and express the hope that you will be given the opportunity to meet the recipient.

- Thanking you in anticipation ...
- I look forward to hearing from you ...
- If you require any further information, do not hesitate to contact me.
- I look forward to meeting you to discuss my skills and the post in more detail.
- I believe that my experience to date has allowed me to develop my skills to a level that would meet the demands of this position.



## HAYS RECRUITMENT AGENCY ADVICE

A CV is the first thing that a potential employer sees that gives them an indication as to whether you may be suitable for their vacancy. It will determine whether they wish to see you for an interview. It is a document that you will need to keep up to date and refer to over your entire working life, which could be over 50 years!

**Remember**  
**A CV is**  
**for life,**  
**yours is**  
**unique to**  
**you**

# CV ADVICE

Most people tend not to like writing about themselves. Some people find it difficult to “sell” themselves in print, while others go the other way and are tempted to oversell themselves, in doing so run the risk of being caught out at the interview with their lies/ bending of the truth!

Use the following tips as a guide:

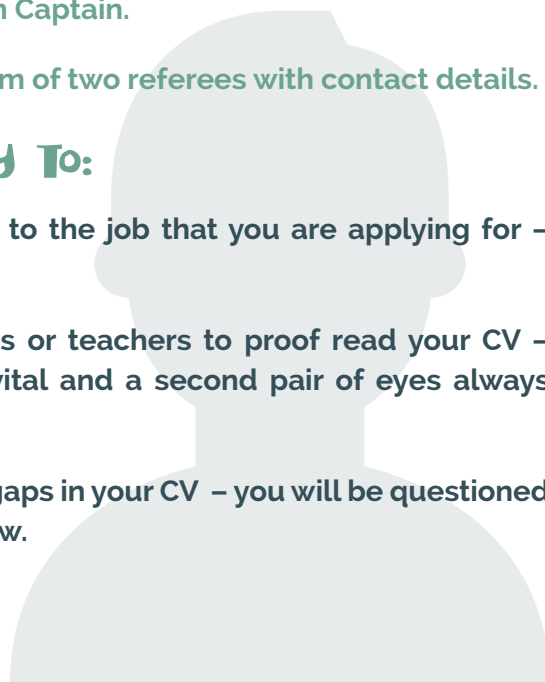
- use good quality white paper with a plain type face – forget italics and decorative fonts
- do not demonstrate your graphics skills by adding an ornate border or any other graphics
- try to keep your CV to no more than 2 pages

### CV STRUCTURE:

- Put your name right at the top of the front page, with your contact details directly underneath.
- The structure of the CV should be clear and easy to understand.
- Education history, academic achievements, work experience (paid or voluntary) should be listed with the most recent first.
- Leave your hobbies and interests until last – highlight your achievements eg Team Captain.
- Finally, list a minimum of two referees with contact details.

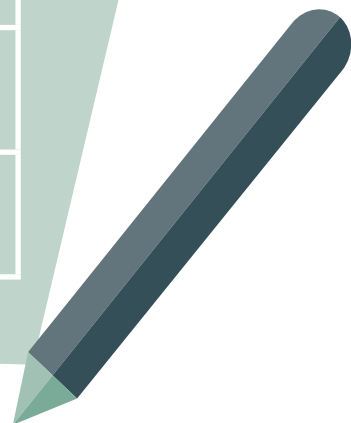
### YOU SHOULD TRY TO:

- Personalise your CV to the job that you are applying for – make it relevant.
- Ask friends, relatives or teachers to proof read your CV – attention to detail is vital and a second pair of eyes always sees things differently.
- Try to have no date gaps in your CV – you will be questioned on them at the interview.



# HOW DO EMPLOYERS INTERPRET THE INFORMATION YOU GIVE THEM?

Activity undertaken	What does this demonstrate?
Assisting family members (disabled, elderly) Looking after younger children for family/friends	That you can be given various levels of responsibility, you are reliable and trustworthy
Sports and Leisure	Demonstrates your ability to work as a team or as an individual. That you are competitive, able to think on your feet, fit and healthy
Voluntary work/ mentoring, meeting and greeting, showing visitors around the school	Demonstrates that you are prepared to give your own time to help others in order to gain experience and skills
100% attendance	Demonstrates that you are punctual, reliable, healthy and that you are unlikely to have time off work due to illness



## TRY THIS TASK

### Andrew's Work Experience Placement

"I undertook a work experience placement at Hays Education in Birmingham. Hays Education is a large recruitment company who specialise in placing teachers in schools for anything from 1 day's supply cover to permanent jobs. My main tasks were: answering the phones; printing and mailing out information to schools; using the computer system to find addresses and school details; photocopying; tea-making; sending out reference requests; typing CVs; scanning documents such as passports onto the computer system; and welcoming visitors. I also experienced sitting in on an interview, which was valuable experience as I was able to pick up interview tips. The consultant asked me to take notes and we compared our ideas at the end."

Condense the information on the left into 5 bullet points or fewer.

- 
- 
- 
- 
-

# MATCHING YOUR DATA TO THE JOB

Before you start writing your CV, you need to match your skills, qualifications and experiences to the actual job you are targeting. Jot down the key features of the job you are applying for and try to match those to your most relevant qualifications and experiences. Ask your tutor to check your notes.

The job – what they want	You – what you can offer
Qualifications needed	Qualifications you have
Skills needed	Your matching skills and how, when and where you achieved them
Experience needed	Matching experience and how you achieved it
Personal qualities needed	Your personal qualities
Other – age, location, physical requirements	Other ways in which you match

# CV EXAMPLE

This is an example from Hays Recruitment Agency

<b>Name:</b>	Thomas Jones
<b>Address:</b>	21 New Street Leicester LE2 4NL
<b>Phone no:</b>	0116 2487977/ 07878 248777
<b>Email address:</b>	Thomas.jones@aol.com

## Keys Skills:

<b>Communication:</b>	Experience of dealing with people on the telephone. Good at writing reports and essays. Ability to follow instructions from teachers.
<b>Application of a number:</b>	Good at doing calculations. Received an award for maths in Year 11.
<b>Information Technology:</b>	Won an award for designing a logo on the computer for school yearbook.
<b>Improving own learning:</b>	Ability to set learning targets and complete tasks. Have already planned revision timetables for exam periods.
<b>Working with others:</b>	Like to be involved with group project work and enjoy taking the initiative to organise the team. Took part in Young Enterprise Scheme. Play competitive football.
<b>Problem solving:</b>	Always complete course work to deadlines and enjoy researching information.

## Academic History:

<b>College/ School</b>	Great Marlow School	
<b>Qualifications</b>	10 GCSEs – including Maths & English	August 2024
	A-levels – Maths, ICT, Law	To be completed August 20...

### Professional/ Work Experience History:

Date:	Dreams plc – Administration Assistant
October 2024 (2 weeks work experience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working in an office environment</li><li>• Answering telephone calls</li><li>• Data input</li><li>• Faxing and filing</li></ul>
September 2024 - present	John Lewis plc – Sales Assistant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Greeting customers</li><li>• Till management</li><li>• Dealing with large sums of money</li><li>• Customer service</li></ul>

### Achievements & Awards:

100% attendance throughout Years 7, 8, 10, 11 & 12.  
Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award – June 2022  
National Rowing Championship finalists 2023

### Hobbies and Interests:

In my spare time I play football for a local team for which I am currently team captain. We play competitive games every Saturday and train twice a week. I also enjoy travelling and spending time with my family.

### References:

<p>Mr O Hollyman Head of Sixth Form Great Marlow School Marlow, Bucks, SL7 1JE Tel: 01628 483752 Email: ohollyman@gms.bucks.sch.uk</p>	<p>A second reference could be one of the following: form tutor, subject teacher, or Deputy Head of Sixth Form.</p>
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# YOU'VE GOT AN INTERVIEW!

If you are fortunate enough to be called for an interview it is crucial that you are well-prepared.

## \*\*\*The critical first five minutes!\*\*\*

Many applicants for jobs of all kinds are rejected in the first five minutes of interview. This is when potential employers form their first opinions of you.

Your written application will, presumably, have fitted the requirements of the organisation because you have been offered an interview. Next, the employer meets you; he or she will assess your physical appearance, speech and behaviour, to complete the picture.

It is crucial, therefore, that you understand that as soon as you walk through the door, you are being judged by everyone, from the receptionist you have first contact with, to those involved in the interview. There should be nothing in your appearance or behaviour to cause disappointment. The best initial approach is to smile.

### OTHER TIPS:

- Make sure you are dressed appropriately, preferably in suit attire.
- Do not arrive smelling of smoke.
- Move to shake hands with people upon being introduced to them.
- Do not sit down until invited to do so.
- Sit upright with your hands resting on your knees.
- Do not arrive chewing gum.

### OBTAINING INFORMATION

The interview is held to give and obtain information: it is a two-sided opportunity. One of the main objectives, for you, is to obtain information regarding the job and the organisation itself. You will probably be invited to ask questions at the end of the interview. Never accept a job until you are satisfied that it is the one you want.



# INTERVIEW CHECKLIST



## Before the interview:

- check the time, date and travel arrangements/ timetables
- research the company
- read back through your CV and covering letter
- rehearse questions and answers with family or friends
- plan what you are going to wear
- think positively about why the job appeals to you

## At the interview:

- Shake hands firmly and confidently and engage using eye contact.
- Wait to be invited to sit down.
- Adopt a relaxed but formal posture.
- Answer questions confidently, clearly and honestly.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand a question.
- Be enthusiastic about the job and the company.
- Maintain a professional image throughout.



## DO NOT:

- be late!
- swear or smoke
- be over familiar or overconfident
- criticise your last employer
- interrupt the interviewer

**GOOD  
LUCK!**

## After the interview:

- Write down the questions you were asked in case they come up in future interviews.
- Review the answers you gave, if you can remember them!
- If you do not hear back from the employer, telephone asking for feedback.

# USEFUL JOB SEARCH WEBSITES

<https://www.jobs4u.uk.com/> - job database: jobs, pay and entry routes

<https://kudos.cascaid.co.uk/#/> - complete your own job search profile

[www.e4s.co.uk/](http://www.e4s.co.uk/) (employment for students) part-time job vacancies

[www.alec.co.uk](http://www.alec.co.uk) - useful tips on writing CVs, job applications and attending interviews

[www.apprenticeships.org.uk/](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/) - apprenticeship information

[www.monster.co.uk](http://www.monster.co.uk) - UK wide job search site - search by region and job title

**Hundreds of websites have specific careers information and job vacancies.  
Here are a few that some students have found useful.**

[www.cityjobs.com](http://www.cityjobs.com) - useful job hunting site covering accountancy, banking & finance, IT, insurance, media, marketing and legal professions

[www.allthetopbananas.com](http://www.allthetopbananas.com) - job search and upload your CV for free

[www.justengineers.net](http://www.justengineers.net) - excellent site, introducing a wide range of engineering careers

[www.abta.com/industry-zone/education-and-career-development/careers-in-travel](http://www.abta.com/industry-zone/education-and-career-development/careers-in-travel) - a Travel Training Company website for those interested in Travel and Tourism

[www.computerweekly.com](http://www.computerweekly.com) - computer weekly, an on-line magazine with IT vacancies

[www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/](http://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/) - careers information and job vacancies in the NHS

[www.uksport.gov.uk](http://www.uksport.gov.uk) - excellent job vacancy information within the Inside UK Sport page

[www.need2know.co.uk/wprk](http://www.need2know.co.uk/wprk) - comprehensive site with career or job advice, interview/CV help, self-employment

[www.kingstrust.org.uk/](http://www.kingstrust.org.uk/) - employment help for young people

[www.redgoldfish.co.uk](http://www.redgoldfish.co.uk) - excellent site covering wide range of jobs and career advice, CVs

[www.jobsite.co.uk](http://www.jobsite.co.uk) - Send your CV to recruitment agencies

[myjobsearchonline.co.uk/](http://myjobsearchonline.co.uk/) - job search engine

**Please let the Sixth Form Team Know if you discover any  
other useful websites.**

## USEFUL CV WEBSITES

[www.cvtemplate.co.uk](http://www.cvtemplate.co.uk) - CV builder

[www.reed.co.uk](http://www.reed.co.uk) - CV builder

[www.monster.co.uk](http://www.monster.co.uk) - CV advice and construction

[nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/](http://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/)

[www.myperfectcv.co.uk/](http://www.myperfectcv.co.uk/)

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

# GAP YEAR

Some students choose to take a gap year in order to reflect on the benefits of each of the choices available: employment, further education or university.



# TAKING A GAP YEAR

## WHAT ARE YOUR OPTIONS?

SOME STUDENTS APPLY FOR UCAS BUT REQUEST A DEFERRED ENTRY BECAUSE THEY WANT TO TRAVEL OR PERHAPS EARN SOME MONEY BEFORE GOING TO UNIVERSITY.

Some students request a deferred entry to UCAS. This means the UCAS application form is filled in for a place at university one year later. A student opting for this has to be sure of their preferred start date because the entry cannot be brought forward.

Some students choose to take a gap year in order to reflect on the benefits of each of the choices available: employment, further education or university. If a student opts for university during their gap year and has not submitted a UCAS application for a deferred entry they must do so. In this scenario, a former student can contact the Sixth Form in GMS to support their application. However, it is important to inform the Head of Sixth Form that an application is going to be submitted. Alternatively, it is possible to register with UCAS as an independent applicant and choose to have an employer as the referee. A student choosing this route is likely to receive unconditional offers, as they will already have their A-level grades 'in the bag'

Students intending to take a gap year must ensure they spend time doing something beneficial. The importance of this is made clear: no university, or potential employer, will be interested in someone who has simply done nothing for a year.

Students intending to travel should research the places to be visited. Find out all that you can from travel agents and companies. Many organisations offer a range of activities abroad, but check them out thoroughly to ensure they are reputable: it is important to buy a quality experience.

Students should check that their option of work or travel offers a qualification at the end of the experience; this will 'look good' on a CV, as well as offering proof that the activity was undertaken.

Some students opt to volunteer, that way they help people who really need support, help and guidance.

REWARDING

LIFE  
ENHANCING

LIFETIME  
EXPERIENCES

# WHY CHOOSE A GAP YEAR?

## **A gap year enables a student to experience life.**

Taking time out to volunteer overseas provides a rare opportunity to do something completely different. It is a springboard for discovering yourself and the world. It might even help you plan for your future, opening your mind to new possibilities.

## **A gap year enables a student to have an adventure.**

Going on a volunteer placement is a real challenge. You will live and work in a different culture, and experience life from another perspective in a way that a tourist never can. You will have time to travel, but your volunteer work comes first.

## **A gap year enables a student to make new friends.**

You are guaranteed to meet like-minded people on a placement. Some will be fellow volunteers; some will be colleagues, students or members of the community. Many will become friends for life.

## **A gap year enables a student to practise a language.**

The best way to improve your foreign language skills is to spend time in a foreign country. Volunteering abroad is an ideal way to improve any language skill you may already have, or even learn a new one. You never know when they may come in handy!

## **A gap year enables a student to experience another culture.**

When simply travelling between countries you rarely have time to learn about different ways of life. By spending several months living and working overseas, you can really experience and immerse yourself in the culture of your chosen country. Many volunteers feel homesick for their placement country, on their return home. It's called Reverse Culture Shock and proves just how fully they were immersed in their new country while volunteering.

## **A gap year enables a student to enhance their CV.**

Getting into university or finding a new job can sometimes be hard work. Having a volunteer placement on your CV can make all the difference, particularly when you can explain the impact that your volunteering had on your own personal development, as well as the benefits you brought to your host community.

## DISCUSS YOUR PLANS

**If you are really serious about taking a gap year, please talk to your tutor, and most importantly – your parents or carers!**

**Below are some useful websites to start the process.**

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/gap-year> – information on work and travel opportunities

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/advice-on-a-gap-year/> – Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice

[www.gap360.com/](http://www.gap360.com/) – work and volunteer worldwide

[earthwatch.org/](http://earthwatch.org/) – worldwide conservation projects

[www.thinkpacific.com](http://www.thinkpacific.com) – marine conservation or community projects

[www.kilroy.co.uk/](http://www.kilroy.co.uk/) – worldwide opportunities for work and travel - branches are available all over London and in Reading, should you wish to visit them for an advisory chat

[www.campsinternational.com](http://www.campsinternational.com) – gap year opportunities for 18-25 year olds

[www.reachvolunteering.org.uk/](http://www.reachvolunteering.org.uk/) – an international youth development charity offering volunteering and gap year placements for under 25s

[www.yearoutgroup.org](http://www.yearoutgroup.org) – gives gap year information: providers of high quality year-out programmes are listed

[www.gapadvice.org](http://www.gapadvice.org) – offers comprehensive, independent information about having a gap year

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What date do I have to apply by?

For most applicants it is by the end of January in the academic year of entry to university. For an exact date go to the UCAS website: 'Dates and deadlines for uni applications'.

For applicants to Oxford, Cambridge, medicine, dentistry, veterinary science and law courses requiring LNAT it is the middle of October, a year before entry. For an exact date go to the UCAS website: 'Dates and deadlines for uni applications'.

## Is UCAS the only application route?

Usually, yes. However, Art Foundation degrees are applied for separately with a portfolio submitted to the institution you wish to attend.

Some courses also require extra tests, which you will need to organise yourself. LNAT – Law, MCAT – Medicine.

## How do I choose the best university/course for me?

Go onto UCAS and conduct a course search. Consider course content, entry requirements, location and visit the university!

## What's the buzzword?

GMS2026.

## What's the fee code?

02.

## How much does it cost to apply?

£28.50 for 5 choices.

## Why should I apply for 5 choices, instead of one?

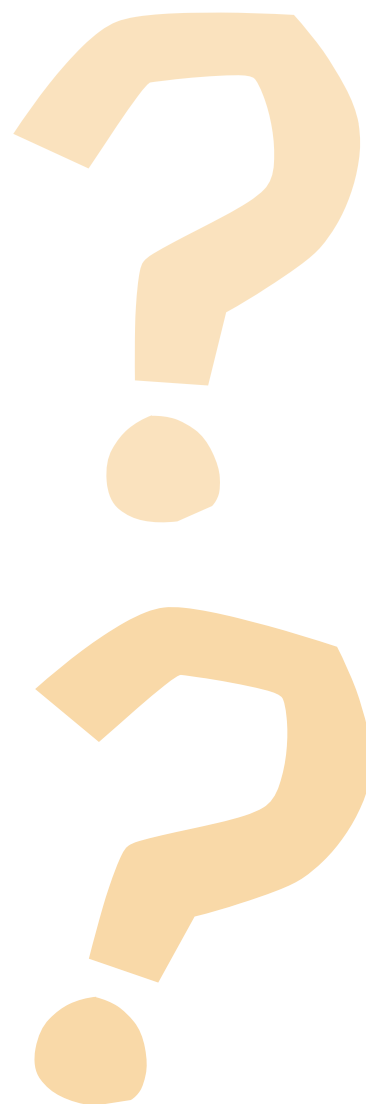
This allows you a wider range of choice. With 5 choices you can apply for a couple with higher grades, and perhaps some requiring slightly lower grades. This allows aspirational choices, along with options should you not perform as well as you would hope.

## What does defer mean?

When you are accepted onto a course, but wish to start it a year later. Your place is secure. You may only do this once. Be certain with this when you apply, as you will not be able to change your mind!

## What does joint honours mean?

You will be studying 2 different subjects ie Law with French.



## **Can I write more than one personal statement if I'm applying for two different subjects/courses?**

No. You should avoid applying for totally different courses, as you may only submit one final version of your personal statement.

## **Who completes my reference?**

Your form tutor, with some collated references from your subject teachers. They will add information about your character, attendance etc.

## **Who decides my predicted grades?**

Your subject teachers. These will be based on your performance throughout Year 12 and will always be a 'best case scenario' grade.

## **What if my predicted grades are too low for the courses I want to apply for?**

You should be realistic about your course choices. You will know the current grades your teachers have said you are working at and should select courses that match these. We will be positive but not over-inflate these predicted grades.

## **What if all of my choices reject me?**

See a member of the Sixth Form Team – you can go through UCAS Extra or UCAS Clearing. All is not lost!

## **What do I do once I have heard back from all 5 of my universities?**

You will need to consider their offers carefully, and check that they correspond with your progress grades. By the end of May (the sooner the better), you will need to log back in to your UCAS and select your firm choice (the university you really want to go to) and your insurance choice (the university you wish to go to if you don't achieve the grades for the firm choice). It would be wise for your insurance choice to have lower grade requirements, where possible.

## **What does Russell Group mean?**

This is a group of the top 24 universities in the country. They are often renowned for their world-class research in a particular field. Grade requirements for these universities may often be higher and places competitive.

## **Why do some universities ask for grades and some ask for points?**

The universities decide themselves which they ask for, but the more traditional universities, such as those in the Russell Group, will typically ask for grades only.

## **Do I get free sandwiches if I do a sandwich degree?**

;)