

APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY

2025



HARROW
SCHOOL

THE HARROW UNIVERSITIES TEAM

CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY COURSE

APPLYING TO A UNIVERSITY COURSE

HIGHER EDUCATION LEXICON



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Choosing a university course is a challenging task. You will find that fancy prospectuses portray a picture that you want to see: students loving the university, with the best facilities in the country and teaching that is second to none. This cannot always be the case, so it is important that you focus on what will suit you best. Avoid being swayed by names, reputations and subjective league tables; instead, form your own opinions through in-depth research. A primary driving force for your choices should be ensuring that the course and university are a good fit for your interests and style of learning. You will undoubtedly be more successful pursuing a degree that you have a strong interest in.

- [The UCAS website](#) is the best place to start. Get a feel for a course under [Search for Courses](#) and then explore more detailed breakdowns via the university links.
- It is vital to visit the universities that you are interested in. That way, you will get a real sense of what they feel like, especially if you visit during their term time.
- Many universities have online open days with virtual tours and live Q&As alongside in-person visits.
- Gathering the opinions of current students can also help. Quizzing student helpers on open days might give as much insight as hearing the formal departmental talks.
- You can also ask the university's admissions office, for example about class sizes, which are rarely published.
- Most importantly, remember that universities continue to change. What may have been the case five or more years ago could well be different now. If anyone makes sweeping statements like "university X is good for subject Y", ask for recent evidence on which to base your opinion.



WHEN EVALUATING A UNIVERSITY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER

- Its type (collegiate, campus, modern, red brick)
- Its global reputation
- Its location
- Its facilities
- Its accommodation
- Student satisfaction

WHEN EVALUATING A COURSE YOU SHOULD CONSIDER

- Its grade requirements
- Its length
- How it is taught (research, contact time, class sizes, industry placements, tutor system)
- How it is assessed (exams, coursework)
- Typical graduate jobs and employability

UCAS

Directory of higher education courses in the UK with links to universities, guidance on how to apply and information on gap-year opportunities.

GENERAL INFORMATION

[UCAS guide](#)

[Birmingham University's advice on writing a personal statement](#)

[Prospects: the UK's official graduate careers website](#)

[Research Excellence Framework: departments' research strengths](#)

[Unionview](#)

[National Student Survey](#)

[WhatUni? University comparison tool](#)

[Complete University Guide](#)

[Visiting universities for an open day](#)

MEDICAL, DENTAL AND VETERINARY COURSES

[The Medic Portal](#)

[General Medical Council](#)

[Medical Schools Council](#)

STUDYING ABROAD

[Eunicas: European universities central application support service](#)

[Fulbright advisory service on universities in the USA](#)

[Sports scholarships to US universities](#)

[Advice on universities in Australia and New Zealand](#)

UNIFROG

Bespoke software matching students to courses and careers. This online software allows extensive research into UK universities, US universities, Oxbridge, apprenticeships and MOOCs. Ask Miss Fox if you cannot access this website.

BOOKS

[HEAP 2025: University Degree Course Offers: The Essential Guide to Winning Your Place at University](#)

[The Times Good University Guide 2025](#)

[Uni in the USA: The Definitive UK Guide to the Universities in the USA \(Good Schools Guide\)](#)

Don't forget to look at universities' prospectuses, websites and student union websites too.

For one-to-one guidance, arrange to speak with the most relevant member of the [School's Universities Team](#).

Your [Unifrog](#) account will also use large quantities of admissions and other data to suggest universities and courses that might be right for you, as well as helping you build your [personal statement](#).

Other resources are available in the Vaughan Library's university section, in books and online. When choosing a course, remember to be wary of any league tables and subjective opinions.

Sandwich courses include at least one placement away from university and are offered in many subjects including Business, Engineering, Finance, Psychology and Sports Science.

A placement may be spent in a variety of ways, such as teaching in a school, studying at another university or working in industry.

The most common type is a ‘thick sandwich’ i.e. one long placement, usually in the third year of study. This is common for many modern language courses.

There are other types of sandwich course, such as the ‘thin sandwich’ pioneered by Brunel, which involves two shorter periods in a placement alternating with periods at university.



Although sandwich courses add a year to the total period of study, they can have significant benefits.

- Students are often paid a salary during periods of work.
- Students acquire new skills and a competitive edge at the start of their careers.
- Students gain insights into potential areas of employment.
- It may be possible to secure full-time employment with a placement company after graduation.

Not everyone is suited to such a course, however. Some might see the placement as an unwelcome interruption to full-time study. If you are considering a sandwich course, it is important to check:

- if the university will help you find a placement (and, if so, what is available and how much choice you are given); and
- how much support you will get from the university during the sandwich year, as well as how your performance is assessed.

Increasing numbers of universities now offer **degree apprenticeships**. These are courses offered jointly with an employer and are designed to allow students to gain a degree while also acquiring practical skills in a work-based environment. Students split their time between academic study and work with the partner organisation. Such courses often guarantee employment on graduation and are fee-free for the student. [Degree apprenticeships](#) can be an attractive option for students who know the industry in which they wish to work.

An interdisciplinary degree is one where you study two or more traditional academic courses combined. This is a relatively new development for some UK universities. You can find out more by looking at [The London Interdisciplinary School](#), which describes itself as ‘a brand new university that will give students the knowledge and skills needed to address social and global problems in an increasingly interconnected world’. You do not apply to it through UCAS.

Oxford and Cambridge are looking for students who have:

- great academic ability and potential;
- a genuine passion for their subject(s);
- motivation, commitment and organisation;
- enthusiasm for complex and challenging ideas;
- clarity of thought and analytical ability;
- intellectual flexibility;
- vocational/professional commitment and interpersonal skills;
- an independent and enquiring mind.

As small group teaching is a key part of an Oxbridge education, applicants should enjoy defending a point of view orally, listening to other opinions and collating in discussion a number of conflicting threads. An applicant should also relish the possibility of being taught by academics of international

repute, working in an intense and competitive academic environment, and immersing themselves fully in their subject of choice for three to four years.

Prospective students can only apply to either Oxford or Cambridge and only for one course. Only organ scholarship applicants can apply to both Oxford and Cambridge. As such, careful research of courses is necessary. Applicants should check carefully the admissions requirements of their desired course, including any admissions tests or work submission requirements.

REQUIREMENTS

Successful Oxbridge applicants will have achieved grade 9 in most of their GCSEs and will be predicted several A* grades at A Level. 78.5% of successful Oxbridge applicants in 2023 had at least three A* predicted grades at A Level, and all had predicted grades that exceeded the typical offer for their course. Oxford and Cambridge are looking for the very best applicants academically, and they will use a number of other measures in addition to those mentioned above to assess an application. Both Oxford and Cambridge require applicants in many subjects to sit an admissions test or submit written work to help assess which applicants to call to interview and to provide further contextual information. Most of these take place in October. While other universities look at the bigger picture and take account of your co-curricular activities, Oxford and Cambridge do not. Excellence in a co-curricular activity

will not compensate for lower academic potential. We suggest that boys focus on getting the best possible predicted grades before embarking on an Oxbridge application.

PREPARATION

In most subjects, particularly in arts and humanities, you will be expected to have read widely in the subject. This means that planning a successful Oxbridge campaign must begin at the start of your Sixth Form studies and preferably well before that. Boys should engage fully with the School's Super-Curriculum and should participate in any relevant external activities including essay prizes, Olympiads, university masterclasses, holiday courses, work placements and research projects. Lists of academic competitions and super-curricular activities are available on Gateway. It is difficult to sustain this level of work without a genuine and deep interest in the subject.

An introductory talk for Oxbridge is held for Lower Sixth boys in January where they can register their interest in the programme. A similar talk will also be given to parents. Interested and able boys will attend dedicated Electives in their subject of interest, where they will experience small group teaching beyond the A Level syllabus, prepare for admissions tests and interviews, and receive guidance and feedback on their application. Boys are expected to demonstrate a high level of independence and application as part of these Electives, and supplement them with independent work during the summer break.



HERE TO HELP

Dr Cooper oversees Oxbridge preparation, which includes attending Oxbridge Electives and interview training, and the Elective beaks will facilitate subject-specific preparation. Boys can also find advice, guidance and resources on the Oxbridge page on Gateway.

These vocational courses are some of the most competitive. Students can apply to four schools only but may apply for a different subject as their fifth choice.

DESIRABLE PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Effective problem-solving and communication skills
- Resilience and the ability to deal with difficult situations
- Personal organisation and time-management skills
- Empathy and the ability to care for others
- Teamwork
- Commitment and stamina

Integrity is essential. Enhanced clearance through the Disclosure and Barring Service will be required after any offer. Any caution, warning or offence involving assault or illegal drugs is likely to prejudice an application.

All medical, dental and veterinary schools have rigorous selection procedures, mainly screening applicants by their academic track record (including performance in the UCAS admissions test) in the first instance and then by their personal statement. Nearly all medical schools interview after shortlisting.

Medical schools require applicants to sit an admissions test.

UCAT([University Clinical Aptitude Test](#)) is taken online during the summer of the Lower Sixth year. Applicants must register for the test online from June.

Many universities give significant weight to UCAS applications when shortlisting applicants for interview. Many have a cut-off score below which they do not interview. The School runs an in-house UCAS preparation course in the Summer term of the Lower Sixth Form.

GRADE REQUIREMENTS

To be successful, applicants must have a consistently strong academic record (predictions of AAA+ at A Level and GCSE grades that compete with applicants with eight or more 8 and 9 grades). Most medical and veterinary schools require applicants to take Chemistry and/or Biology. Applicants should therefore study both subjects. For the more academically selective institutions, applicants should also study Maths or Physics.

HOW TO PREPARE

All applicants should undertake relevant work experience. Different institutions have different requirements, but for medics this



should include working in a caring or service role with people who are ill, disabled or disadvantaged. Ideally, vets should have recent work experience in an animal-husbandry setting. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, virtual work experience is being accepted as an alternative.

HERE TO HELP

A full Harrow guide to applying to medicine can be found [here](#). Mr Strang oversees applications and can provide further guidance as required.

There are two main pathways into higher education in Art and Design: foundation courses and degree courses.

FOUNDATION COURSES

One-year foundation courses are designed for students wishing to pursue a career in the subject but who need further training and professional guidance before making a definite choice. These courses offer a solid grounding in a range of disciplines including film, video, graphic design, fine art, photography and textiles. After a short and intense series of modules, students select a specialism and are allocated a personal tutor to guide them through the Bachelor (BA) degree application process. Students then prepare a portfolio of work for March/April interview.

We recommend the Foundation Diploma for students unsure of their specialism or wishing to develop their portfolio. Applicants may apply to as many foundation courses as they wish (with the exception of the University of the Arts, which allows only one choice). The application process is not administered through UCAS but is explained on art school websites.



DEGREE COURSES

Three-year degree courses (BA Hons) in Art and Design are the norm, although some schools offer a four-year course. These courses are aimed at students who are already proficient in a specialist subject, for example photography or fine art painting. Applicants straight from school should remember that they will be in direct competition with others who have taken a foundation course. Their portfolio must, therefore, be of very high calibre and focused on their specialist subject. Beaks will offer 'best fit', tailored advice for boys wishing to apply for Fine Art courses at Oxford (Ruskin School of Art) and UCL (Slade School of Fine Art), as well as the many excellent courses available at Edinburgh and Glasgow universities.

Applicants can apply for up to five Art and Design degree courses through the usual

UCAS process. Applications are made in the Autumn and interviews usually take place in March and April.

APPLICANTS SHOULD DEMONSTRATE:

- fascination with the visual world;
- ability to articulate influences i.e. from artists and designers;
- understanding of the course;
- capability to develop ideas both conceptually and visually;
- commitment to improving craft skills;
- ability to accept and benefit from constructive criticism;
- willingness to experiment, innovate and take risks;
- no hint of arrogance or pomposity about their work;
- an excellent portfolio of Art and Design work.

HERE TO HELP

An applicant's Art beak will oversee their application but Mr Hedges is the first port of call as the beak on the Universities Team responsible for the Creative Arts.

Many art schools offer week-long portfolio preparation courses, including Kingston University, Central St Martin's, London College of Fashion and Chelsea College of Arts.

HOW TO PREPARE

Applicants' portfolios should usually comprise 15–20 completed pieces of work for a foundation course and 20–25 pieces for a degree. Drawing is the most important skill to demonstrate, alongside a variety of other work in different media. Applicants should include sketchbooks that reflect their own motivation, interests, talents and ideas. Portfolios must be presented in a professional manner. Applicants should check art school websites for any stipulations on what to include.

Applicants are encouraged to participate in Harrow's extensive lecture and exhibition programme offered by the Pasmore and OSRG Arts Societies, and in independent projects and visits to galleries and museums.

Since the rise in UK tuition fees, there has been more interest from UK applicants in studying at universities abroad. In addition to the standard questions, those interested in international courses should consider:

- the alignment between A Level standards and the international university's entry requirements;
- likely tuition and living costs;
- recognition of the international degree in the UK (particularly for professional qualifications);
- the support network in place should there be a medical or other emergency;
- the student demographic (locally populated universities tend to be quiet at weekends).

USA

There are over 4,000 universities in the USA, many of them ranked among the very best in the world. Most international applicants to US universities opt for four-year Liberal Arts programmes, where a range of subjects is studied in the early years before specialisation in one or two subjects in the final two years. The average cost is approximately \$60,000 per year, but many US universities offer very generous bursaries to international applicants, and some are even completely need-blind. In addition, some US universities offer merit-based scholarships. The selection process for US universities is more holistic in nature than

for UK universities. There is also no limit to the number of US universities to which applicants can apply. Applying to US universities requires preparing multiple documents, often including the SAT or ACT (American standardised tests) as well as several application essays and recommendations from beaks and House Masters. Boys thinking of a US application must inform their House Master and Mrs Fletcher by the start of the Autumn term of the Lower Sixth Form so that they can receive the appropriate support and guidance well ahead of the US deadlines. Medicine and Law are postgraduate degree courses in the US.

A recent development has been the establishment of satellite campuses in other parts of the world, including the Middle East, by some prominent US universities. NYU Abu Dhabi, for instance, offers an exciting opportunity with very generous financial support to students who are academically able, have a global outlook and have demonstrated leadership ability.

CANADA

Canadian universities are a little cheaper than those in the USA, although still fairly costly in general terms. Universities set their own fees so it might be worth shopping around if cost is an issue. It will also vary by subject. Humanities courses tend to be less expensive than Engineering or Medicine for example. Applications are made via a university's international office; there is no centralised application procedure as such.

The application process for Canadian universities is simpler than that for US universities.



AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Australia has 18 universities including an elite 'Group of Eight'. New Zealand has eight. The education systems are based on the UK model, but the academic year runs from February to November. Some programmes might be attractive for their environment (for example Marine Biology, Sport Sciences) or their entry requirements (they are lower for Veterinary Medicine than in UK). [Study Options](#) oversees UK applications to Australia and New Zealand.

EUROPE

Many European universities offer degree programmes in English, such as Bocconi in Milan, a hugely respected university. The seven universities in the Irish Republic operate a similar system to UCAS but do not make conditional offers, allocating places instead

after results are received. Entry requirements for European universities are generally lower than for UK universities. We hold an annual European Universities Fair in the Spring term that Lower Sixth boys are encouraged to attend, as well as promoting events throughout the year.

HERE TO HELP

Mrs Fletcher oversees applications to universities in the USA and Canada. She is assisted by Miss Edgell. Miss Fox will advise on applications to other universities overseas.



APPLYING TO US UNIVERSITIES – TIMELINE AND KEY DEADLINES

LOWER SIXTH	UPPER SIXTH
<p>Before the Autumn term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking through A Level choices: have I chosen the right, i.e. academically demanding and versatile, set of A Level subjects that will be attractive to US universities? Can I realistically continue with my four chosen subjects all the way through and achieve good grades in all of them? Conducting preliminary research about US universities: do I want to study on the East Coast or on the West Coast? Do I want to study in a big city or do I want to be on a more remote campus? How big do I want my university to be? Asking parents to attend the meeting about US universities before first exeat. Informing Mrs Cole in case access arrangements are required for the ACT/SAT (they are not granted automatically based on the assessments carried out for public exams in the UK). 	<p>Before the Autumn term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalising the list of universities and making the decision regarding the ED/REA applications. Creating the Common App account (1 Aug) and the equivalent accounts for the universities that do not use the Common App. Drafting all application essays, including both the Common App essay and the supplement essays for both Early and Regular applications. Preparing for outstanding standardised tests if required and if the desired mark has not yet been achieved. Visiting the potential university destination if possible, or attending virtual tours. Completing some valuable independent research work and/or work experience.
<p>Autumn term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensively preparing for the ACT/SAT for the first sitting of the tests in December, either by attending the preparation course run by the School or independently (approximately 4-5 hours per week). Registering for the test with the ACT or the College Board in early September. Attending meetings with admissions directors from US universities visiting the School. Performing to the highest possible standard in the end-of-term Trials. 	<p>Autumn term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attending meetings with admissions directors if still uncertain about some university choices or to make a good impression (demonstrated interest is still taken into account by many US universities). Finalising all application essays, checking all the deadlines carefully and submitting all the applications, starting with the ED/REA/EA applications. Receiving ED/REA/EA offers in mid-December.
<p>Spring term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing for the ACT/SAT retakes if required. Sustaining excellent academic performance. Building a portfolio of co-curricular activities, participating in subject Olympiads and essay prizes, investigating research work and work experience opportunities. Selecting recommenders and completing 'brag sheets' for them. 	<p>Spring term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully focusing on A Levels to achieve the predicted grades. Excelling in the mock exams in January. Submitting Mid-Year Reports (counsellors). Receiving Regular Application offers. Making the decision regarding the university destination while ensuring full compliance with the rules (ED). Accepting or rejecting offers by 1 May. Beginning visa application process.
<p>Summer term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieving the best possible results in the end-of-year Trials to secure excellent A Level predicted grades. Selecting recommenders and completing 'brag sheets' for them. Attending application essay workshops, narrowing university choices in light of the achieved test scores and the probable predicted A Level grades. 	<p>Summer term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performing to the highest possible standard in A Level exams.

APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU

YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

UNDERSTANDING YOUR OFFER

RECEIVING YOUR RESULTS

TIMETABLE FOR APPLICATIONS



HOW

Applications to UK universities are made and tracked online via [UCAS Apply](#). Applicants can apply to five higher education institutions. Once all conditional offers are received, these are reduced to one first (firm) choice and one second (insurance) choice.

At Harrow, we have a [structured programme in place to support this application process](#). This involves an early submission deadline, which benefits your application chances. It is vital that boys take the initiative and meet these deadlines.

WHEN

We strongly advise that all boys submit a UCAS application in the Upper Sixth, even those who are strongly committed to a gap year and those who are unsure about their subject choice.

With some universities, it is possible to indicate a desire to take a gap year from the outset of the application process and to apply for entry a year later. Please note, however, that a deferred entry application cannot be revoked. Students who have compulsory National Service requirements should ask Dr Holt at an early stage for bespoke advice on the application pathway.

We are able to provide support during this complex process far more easily while a boy is at School. Having offers to aim for also acts as an incentive to greater academic achievement.

An applicant is not committing himself until his A Level results have been received. Even then, offers can be refused and a second application process undertaken. The process will be all the more familiar given that the applicant has been through it the year before.





- 1** Conduct detailed research into courses and universities.
- 2** Discuss your progress with the Universities Team, your Tutor and House Master, particularly before finalising your firm and insurance offers.
- 3** Enter correct information in your UCAS form, with full disclosure of matters such as dyslexia and other SEND diagnoses.
- 4** Ensure your personal statement is entirely your own words.
- 5** Amend your application in light of advice.
- 6** Check whether you need to sit entry tests; register for them if required.
- 7** Check your emails daily and act on university matters quickly (certainly by the deadline).

The personal statement is your opportunity to show admissions tutors that you stand out from the crowd of applicants. It is your only chance in the initial application to demonstrate through your studies and super-curricular engagement that you are a good fit for the course you wish to study. Anything you mention must be relevant and demonstrate your interest in the degree subject.

The personal statement has undergone some changes ahead of the 2025 application cycle, moving away from one longer piece of text to three separate sections, each with a different question to help shape the focus for your answers. The expectation of what you need to cover in the personal statement, as well as the overall length (character count), are unchanged from existing guidance.

The new questions should offer you a starting point to highlight all your qualities and achievements, helping you to give the best examples to prove you're a good fit for your chosen course and ensuring that you include exactly what universities and colleges want to see. Each answer will have a minimum character count of 350 characters contributing to a 4000 overall character limit (including spaces).

HERE TO HELP

If the courses for which you are applying have a UCAS Entry Profile, use any reference to 'qualities sought in applicants' as a guide.

You will be allocated a beak who is a subject specialist to give you feedback on your personal statement. You should also discuss your draft with your Tutor and, where relevant, the Head of Subject. Remember, however, that there is no perfect personal statement. The more opinions you seek, the less convincing and cohesive it is likely to become.

STRUCTURE AND STYLE

- You should aim to fill most of the area available on the form (4000 characters including spaces) but don't cramp the overall layout.
- Write positively, in full sentences and avoiding exaggerated statements.
- Keep it clear and simple but try to leave an impression of curiosity and enthusiasm.

Never borrow phrases or ideas from other applicants or from AI-generated text. UCAS has sensitive anti-plagiarism software that will check your personal statement against others in the current and previous application cycles. Any similarities will be passed on to all your university choices and will probably result in your disqualification.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO STUDY THIS COURSE OR SUBJECT?

This is your opportunity to showcase your passion for and knowledge of your chosen subject area and to demonstrate to universities and colleges why it's a good fit for you and your ambitions for the future. Examples of what you might talk about are:

■ Your motivations for studying this course(s)

- » Have you been inspired by a key role model or moment in your life? Explain why it's a subject you love and want to pursue further. You might begin with the defining moment when your interest began (for example a geographer peering into the crater of Mt Vesuvius).
- » You should then discuss your interest in general terms (for example the wide variety of topics covered, the opportunity to look at ethical issues from a different standpoint).

- » Go on to mention specific areas that you have researched. Support this with reference to a few books, periodicals or articles, which your beaks may be able to recommend. Give your opinion on the author's viewpoint rather than simply listing the titles.
- » Engaging with relevant MOOCs or other online courses can be another beneficial avenue to help demonstrate your research in the subject area.

■ Your knowledge of this subject area and interests

- » An extended essay or large project should be prominent and possibly even your starting point.
- » Is there a particular area you've researched and can't wait to learn more about? A book or subject expert doing great things that has sparked your interest? Universities

and colleges want to see you've 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 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.

HOW HAVE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS AND STUDIES HELPED YOU TO PREPARE FOR THIS COURSE OR SUBJECT?

This is where you can show evidence of relevant or transferable skills you have gained from your formal education and highlight your understanding of how this will help you succeed in this subject area.

■ What relevant or transferable skills do you have that make you a great candidate?

- » You could talk about the 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.
- » Talking about the skills developed in activities such as extended essay competitions, project work, Olympiads, MOOCs or Electives is essential.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO PREPARE OUTSIDE YOUR FORMAL EDUCATION, AND WHY ARE THESE EXPERIENCES USEFUL?

This is your chance to talk about any other activities you have undertaken outside your formal education, or personal experiences that further demonstrate your suitability for

the course. This section is likely to be highly personal, and anything you do mention should reflect on why you are including it.

■ Work experience, employment, or volunteering

- » Whether it's in-person work experience at your local school, 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 that are relevant to your chosen course.

■ Personal life experiences or responsibilities

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

■ Hobbies and any extracurricular or outreach activities

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

■ Achievements outside your School studies

- » This could be a position of responsibility such as captain of a club, your skill at playing a musical instrument, a competition you won, or a qualification you've attained outside the classroom.
- » Admissions tutors will expect you to have taken advantage of some of the extensive co-curricular activities that Harrow offers.
- » Admissions tutors value signs of persistence (for example 'I have played

the piano for five years', even if you have never taken Grade 1) but only if it is an activity that you have taken part in recently i.e. since the Fifth Form.

- » Do not list too many co-curricular activities as this can suggest that you flit between activities or will have no time in which to fit studying. It is better to specify ways in which you have benefited.

OTHER ASPECTS TO CONSIDER

- If you are applying for a subject that you have not studied at A Level (for example Engineering, Medicine, Psychology), you must justify your application by demonstrating extensive research. Don't let an admissions tutor think that you are looking for an escape route from current subjects.
- If you are taking a gap year, your personal statement should include work experience, projects or charity work that can be related to your degree choice.
- If you are applying for a joint honours degree, you may wish to consider adopting a thematic approach to your personal statement.

To help track your skills and super-curricular engagement, you have been provided with an Achievement Record. This document helps to structure aspects of your personal statement and ensure that you are engaging with opportunities that demonstrate that you are a good fit for the course you wish to study. It is essential that you invest time in engaging with this document from an early stage in the Spring term and plan to participate in activities relating to your subject interests. Further support in writing your personal statement will be provided through a range of talks in the UK University Lecture Series in the Spring and Summer terms, and in the Lower Sixth University Preparation Course in June.



UCAS POINTS

Most of the universities to which Harrow boys apply make offers in terms of three A Level grades.

Some universities use a points system which is based on the following tariff:

A LEVEL	GRADE
56	A*
48	A
40	B
32	C
24	D
16	E

An offer of 120 points might simply specify 'from three A Levels' (BBB, ABC, AAD etc.). This provides a little more flexibility in application. For example, if an applicant achieves BBB when they needed ABC on a grade-based offer then they are unlikely to be admitted. On the points-based system, they would still have 120 points and therefore be accepted.



RESULTS DAY

If the required grades are attained, wait for confirmation of your place and sign the acceptance form.

If the required grades for your firm choice are not attained, consult UCAS Track. Your application will be passed automatically to your insurance choice.

If the required grades for your insurance choice are not achieved, consult UCAS Track and the university directly.

If the required grades for your insurance choice are attained, wait for confirmation of your place and sign the acceptance form.

If the insurance choice does not accept you with reduced grades, your application will be eligible to enter Clearing, which will help you to gain a place on a course at another university where there are still spaces.

You must engage in this process as quickly as possible as places get taken up rapidly. At the same time, do not rush into taking a place on a course you have not carefully researched or at a university you have not visited.

HERE TO HELP

The Academic and Universities Director, Director of Studies, Master-in-Charge of UK Universities and House Masters are available to give advice when A Level results are released.





LOWER SIXTH		UPPER SIXTH
SEPTEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduction to the university application process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Applicant's section of the UCAS form completed and given to Universities Team (by second weekend of term) ■ Oxbridge+ Electives run through the Autumn term (two periods per week)
OCTOBER		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ House Master written references completed ■ UCAS forms submitted (Oxbridge, Veterinary and Medical by 15 October, others by half-term)
NOVEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Talk to Lower Sixth by Academic and Universities Director and Master-in-Charge of UK Universities on university applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oxbridge preparation ■ Oxbridge admissions tests
DECEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Research degree courses and institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oxbridge interviews
JANUARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduction to the Vaughan Library's universities section anducas.com ■ Parents' meeting ■ Oxbridge meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mocks ■ Oxford and Cambridge offers made ■ University offers continue to be made (the earliest can be made in October)
MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Universities Fair ■ Tentative degree choice ■ UK University Lecture Series: Training and research for applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All UK parents complete a student finance application online ■ Art and Design course interviews
APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Organise experience of work for summer holidays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Art and Design course interviews
MAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Registration opens for UCAT admission tests ■ Oxbridge+ Electives begins for the Summer term (one period per week) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Final firm and insurance choices submitted to UCAS
JUNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lower Sixth University Preparation Course: begin applications and draft personal statement; Higher Education Fair ■ Deadline for Oxbridge applicants to indicate any choral or instrumental award applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A Level examinations ■ Correspondence address on UCAS amended
SUMMER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Experience of work ■ Oxbridge preparation ■ UCAT admission tests ■ Fill in UCAS application form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A Level results ■ Post-A Level advice (we recommend that boys be in the UK when results are published in case they warrant any communication with the universities or Harrow Universities Team)

HIGHER EDUCATION LEXICON

ACADEMIC COURSE

A subject like History or Biology, studied for its own sake rather than leading directly into a trade or profession (for example Law).

CAMPUS UNIVERSITY

A university that completely takes over an area and provides its own shops, banks etc. such that the resident student does not have to leave it for any of the usual needs of life.

CLEARING

Generally affects you if you fail to get the grades needed for the universities you have chosen. It happens mainly in August when the universities find out through the results how many places are not filled with qualified students. Universities will often make offers below their normal grades to fill the places. At this point, or any time before this, if you decline any offers you hold, or if your grades are not acceptable to your universities, you are in 'Clearing' and can make approaches to universities with places and follow this up via UCAS.

The [UCAS website](#) is the central location where you can find out which courses are available in Clearing.

DEGREES

A qualification awarded by a university after a satisfactory level has been achieved.

UNDERGRADUATE/BACHELOR DEGREES

Most of these are Honours Degrees, which are classified by results into 1, 2:1, 2:2, 3 and Fail. They are entitled BA (Bachelor of Arts), BSc (Bachelor of Science) or BEng (Bachelor of Engineering), but some four-year first degrees are entitled MEng (Master of Engineering) etc. 'Ordinary Degrees' are Pass and Fail and are easier to get into, but less highly rated.

POSTGRADUATE DEGREES

Taken after an undergraduate degree.

(1) MSc or MA – often a one-year taught course in a specialist subject, for example a Geography graduate might do an MSc in river management.

(2) PhD/DPhil – is an arts or science research-based degree taking at least three years. After it you would be called a Doctor (non-medical).

DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP

Offers the chance to combine study with on-the-job vocational training. Often offered as a joint enterprise between a university and an employer. Usually leads to guaranteed employment as well as a cost-free degree.

HIGHER EDUCATION

University-level education. Distinguish this from further education (post-16 education).

SANDWICH COURSE

In many vocational courses, especially in engineering and business, instead of doing final exams in the third year, students take up paid placements where they can do serious work for the firm that employs them. Salaries of between £11,000 and £25,000 are common. The student then returns to university for a final year in which they will often write a dissertation or extended essay, usually drawing on their placement experience.

STUDENTS' UNION

This is an organisation, based in a building of the same name, which provides support, food and entertainment.

UCAS

Based in Cheltenham, UCAS acts as an intermediary between applicants and higher education institutions.

VOCATIONAL COURSE

Some sectors require a specific degree such as Engineering, Medicine or Veterinary Science. These are described as vocational courses.

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