



Mayfield

Mayfield Higher Education Booklet



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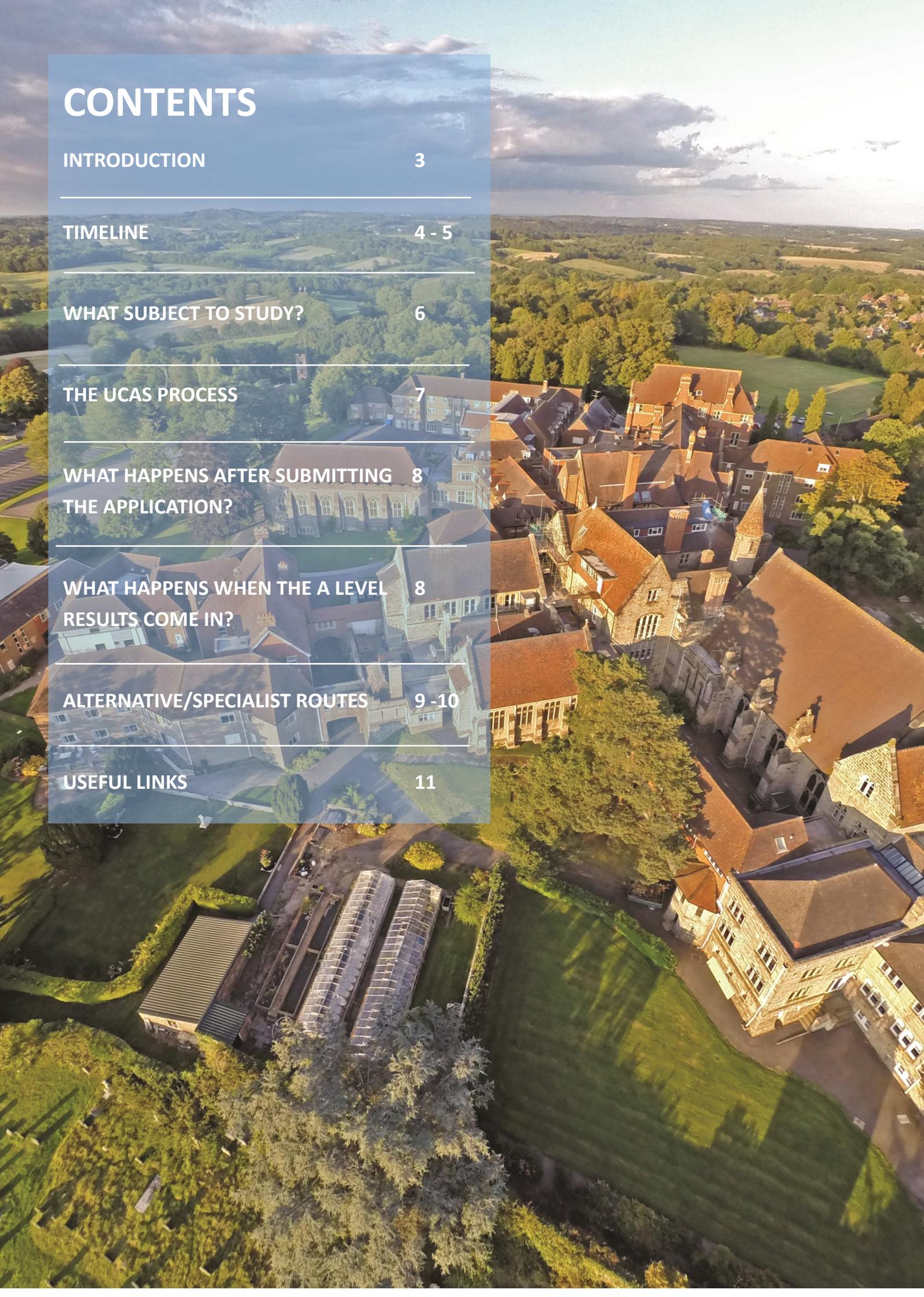
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Introduction

The majority of Mayfield students move on when they leave school to enjoy further studies in Higher Education.

From a practical perspective, a university degree provides enhanced employment and earnings prospects for the vast majority of students. An article in *The Daily Telegraph* claimed that “Women with degrees earn three times as much as female non-graduates”. From another point of view, studying for a degree obviously provides a unique, and for most of us once-in-a-lifetime, opportunity to explore a specialist subject or subjects in great depth and to be taught by leading experts in the field. Finally, for developing young people, on an individual and social level, the years at university also represent an invaluable bridge from the comparative comfort and security of home and school to the world of independent adulthood. Obviously it is not the only option, but it is far and away the most popular. This guide outlines the process and how we support Mayfield girls to pursue their ambitions in this respect.

It is a great opportunity, and it is likely to have a key influence on the rest of your life, so there is an obvious need to take a lot of care over decisions about what to study and where. It is necessary — and well worth it — to devote a *significant* amount of time to researching options, visiting higher education institutions and thinking carefully about the right choice. In many ways, only you can do this. Naturally, however, we also believe it is very important for girls to discuss their options with their parents and to receive guidance and support from teachers, tutors, Mrs Davies and me. Our doors are always open and in conjunction with our Lifeskills and Careers programme we hope to give you the best opportunity to make the right choice for you.

This booklet offers an introduction to the process, but is by no means comprehensive. You have all been given access to Unifrog which has a wealth of material to guide you through this process and will enable you to undertake more detailed research into your areas of interest. There are also a number of other resources mentioned in this booklet which will help you.



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Timeline

Year 12

January:	UCAS preparation begins, largely with form tutors: initially by exploring career possibilities and preferences; we then consider subject choices, linking these where appropriate to likely career choices, and current enjoyment. Introduction to Unifrog.
February to June:	Extensive research into universities and course options. Girls book places on university open days and subject taster days.
March:	Oxford and Cambridge Student Conference online or in SW London — a good day for those interested in applying to these universities to find out in detail about courses, the application process, interviews etc.
June, July (+ Sept/Oct)	Open days commence.
June 20th :	UCAT Booking Opens.
July 4th/5th:	UCAS days in school. Girls register with UCAS etc.
July 11th:	UCAT testing starts.

Year 13

September 1st:	Registration for BMAT and Oxford and Cambridge Admissions tests opens (done through the school).
September:	Time to finalise personal statements. School UCAS references.
September 29th:	UCAT last testing date.
October 15th:	Closing date for applications to Oxford or Cambridge and for Medicine, Veterinary Science and Dentistry. Last date for BMAT entries.
Late Oct/early Nov:	Majority of UCAS applications submitted, with the exception of Art and Design degree courses.
November 3rd (est):	BMAT and other Oxbridge entrance tests taken in school.
October/November:	The offers start to come in.
Early December:	Interviews at Oxford and Cambridge (first and second week of December); some Medical and Vet School (non-Oxbridge) interviews are mid November (although many are in the Spring Term); some interviews in some subjects at other universities. Applications for places on most Art & Design Degree and Foundation courses sent off shortly before or after Christmas.

Timeline

Year 13 continued...

- January:** Oxford and Cambridge Universities inform candidates if they have been successful.
- January 25th:** Closing date for UCAS applications.
- January 31st:** Usual final date for key Art and Design Foundation course applications.
- February 25th:** Eligible candidates can use UCAS 'Extra' from this date.
- March 31st:** UCAS expect universities to have responded to all your applications by this date. Students can accept two offers, one 'firm' choice and one 'insurance' (in case they do not achieve the grades required for their firm choice).
- 5-7th May:** Final date for accepting offers (unless you have not heard from all your choices by 31st March).
- May/June:** A level examinations.
- August:** A level results day; clearing vacancies published.

Choose your Open Day visits with care: we can only permit a very limited number of visits (three school days in any one term), as any day out obviously means you miss important lesson time in several subjects. If you want to go to a number that are a long way away, try to group them together in one trip (if they are in the same direction of course!)

WHERE POSSIBLE SELECT OPEN DAYS THAT ARE AT THE WEEKEND OR IN THE SUMMER HOLIDAY.



What subject to study?

If you already have precise career plans, you *may* need to study a specific degree subject. However, not everyone has such detailed plans at this stage. Furthermore, the successful pursuit of many careers is not dependent on having studied a specific subject at university, in which case the decision is likely to be based, above all, on your academic interests (often one of your A-level subjects), on your *general* ideas about suitable career areas (we help you try to pin these down at the start of the Spring Term in year 12), and from any evidence of the career prospects for particular degrees at particular universities that can be gleaned from research.

Some careers do, of course, require specific degrees: obvious examples are Medicine, Veterinary Medicine and Engineering. If a student has precise career plans or aspirations, careful research is needed to find out what subject-specific requirements there might be in relation to degree-level study. As ever, Unifrog is an excellent resource for finding out more about these areas, but there are plenty of other great sources out there.

Here are a few key questions to ask yourself:

1. Do you really know now what you want to be doing in 3-5 years time? Is there a chance you will change your mind? (Bearing in mind the cost of obtaining a degree, this is not a trivial question!)
2. What are employment prospects like for the degree you have in mind? (University league tables, such as www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk and Unifrog answer this question for specific courses at specific universities).
3. Which courses are most likely to keep your options open for employment in a range of appropriate careers?

Above all, it is important to research the available options thoroughly. If possible, find out what you can from people already working in the field of interest, by asking what the entry requirements are.

If you do not yet have specific career plans, or where the subject of the degree is less important in relation to future employment, the most obvious approach is to choose to continue studying a favourite A level subject. It is worth being aware that future employers may be most likely to respond positively to an applicant with a good degree in one of the core academic subjects (such as Maths, English, Science, a Humanity or a Language) – to a certain extent, the notion of ‘soft’ subjects continues to apply at degree and employment level! Furthermore, degrees from ‘Russell Group’ universities potentially carry more weight with some employers.

It is also important in this context to remember that any one A level subject is part of a wider family of subjects. Don’t ignore alternative options therefore! Chemists might want to consider Pharmacology or Chemical Engineering, for example; Economists could consider Accountancy or PPE; English students might look at Journalism or Law; Geographers have a range of options including Geology and Urban Planning; Historians might study Law, Politics or International Relations; Language students are not restricted to those languages they have already studied; Mathematicians might consider Engineering, Statistics or Computer Sciences. Use resources like Unifrog to widen your search and consider all options.

As part of the process of choosing a subject area for degree-level study, it is extremely important to look closely at the precise details of the courses on offer. These really do vary considerably from university to university, so it is wise to check that the contents of the course at a specific university suit your specific interests and abilities. Other factors, such as the location of the university or aspects of the style of teaching on offer should also be given careful consideration: visiting universities’ open days is time-consuming but vital!

The UCAS Process

We will begin the process of completing the UCAS application in school at the beginning of July. All students receive all the advice and information as they need to do this. The UCAS application has a number of sections, which can be divided into three groups. Students fill in two (personal details and personal statement) and the school fills in one (the reference).

1. Personal Information/Courses/Education etc

Personal details, their qualifications and their choice of universities and courses. You complete much of this information in July and then finalise your choices in September/early October.

2. The Personal Statement

You are required to write about 650 words explaining why you want to study your desired course and outlining the qualities and achievements that you think make you worthy of a place on that specific course. Personal statements need to be carefully crafted: they require much planning and consideration. Detailed advice will be given about how to structure the information and the sort of things that need to be said, but of course it is also important that the statement *is* individual. Subject teachers and form tutors will provide advice and support in addition to that offered by Mr Doy. Ideally, you need to return to school at the beginning of Year 13 in September with your personal statements completed. If you are still torn between different courses at that stage, we would advise you to prepare two or even three drafts, each directed towards a different choice. Examples of different personal statements for different courses can be found on Unifrog.

3. The School Reference

The school reference provides a positive commentary on the student's abilities, achievements and motivation. It is extremely useful if you can use Unifrog to record your extra-curricular activities as this will enable your reference to be as detailed as possible. References are based on comments provided by subject teachers; these are collated and developed by the Sixth Form tutors, the Head of Sixth Form and the Headmistress. We shape each reference to suit the course for which the student is applying. References are always both positive in tone and honest. All students are shown their reference before it is sent off. Your reference will also include predicted grades. Subject teachers, in conjunction with the Head of Sixth Form, will use their professional discretion to base these on evidence from your Year 12 summer exam results, as well as your ability and future growth potential throughout Year 13. They will be an optimistic assessment of your final performance in the summer exams.



What happens after submitting the application?

Applicants receive an email to tell them that their application has been received and to provide a unique UCAS personal ID which will be required when contacting universities and colleges.

There are no hard and fast rules regarding when the offers do or don't come in: they can come the same day or after many months of waiting. The earlier the application is made, the better the chances that it will be read properly by admissions tutors. Some students will be called to interview before an offer is made: this usually happens in November or December, but can be later.

Offers are made in UCAS Track (although Oxford and Cambridge mostly do this by email). For Year 13 students, offers are usually conditional: the institution offering a place does so on the condition that certain grades are achieved in the Summer. Once a student has received responses from all the universities they have applied to (but not before) they can make their decision, choosing one 'firm' choice and one 'insurance' choice, which will usually be an offer requiring lower grades than the first choice.

In the unlikely case of not receiving offers, UCAS 'Extra' operates from mid-February to the end of June, providing an opportunity to make applications to courses which still have vacancies. A final option is 'Clearing', which is an opportunity that opens on results day in August for students who have failed to meet the requirements of any of the offers they accepted. Students apply directly by telephoning the university to enquire about a course which has spaces left (details of which courses have places are published on UCAS and in the national press).

What happens when the A Level results come in?

In August girls will learn about their results by email. At the same time they can log on to UCAS track to see if they have got into one of their chosen universities. If students get their grades for their firm or insurance choice then their place will be confirmed on UCAS Track.

Some candidates might have missed their offer by a small margin or they might have the right number of points but from the wrong combination of subjects. Often the first choice or insurance university will not have a problem with this and the student's place will be confirmed.

If a student who has narrowly missed the requirement for one of their choices is rejected, it is a good idea to telephone the admissions tutor to discuss the situation. If in doubt about a grade, it may be worth requesting a priority remark and informing the admissions tutors that this has been done.

If there is no luck in confirming a first or insurance place, Clearing is the next step. Students will be issued with a Clearing ID and must contact universities which still have places on their courses directly. Newspapers and the UCAS website give information on where the vacancies are.

There will be senior members of staff in school on results day to advise on the best course of action and to offer advice on what to say during calls to admissions tutors. ***It is strongly advised that students are either in the UK, or at least easily contactable on results day so that they may be on hand to secure a place at university through the available channels.*** All information about post results services will be sent to students at the beginning of the summer and again a few days before A Level results day. Written permission must be obtained by the Examinations' Officer before any of these services are requested since they incur a payment, which will only be refunded by the exam board if the application is successful.

Alternative/Specialist Routes

Some routes into Higher Education work in a slightly different way to the conventional UCAS route. There is lots of information on Unifrog about these routes but here is a brief overview of some that require extra thought or preparation.

Art Foundation or degree course in Art and Design

Some students who wish to pursue Art and Design in Higher Education start with a Foundation Course. Please note that this process is separate from UCAS.

Students wishing to apply for a place on a degree course can do so through UCAS however. Girls should consult their Art, Ceramics and/or Textiles teachers for advice. Most institutions require a digital portfolio to be prepared and uploaded, either at the time of applying or slightly later (the precise timing and the specific nature of the digital portfolio differ quite significantly between different institutions and need to be carefully checked when researching which courses to apply for).

Timetable

June - Year 12: Students should attend Open Days at Art Colleges that might be of interest.

Sept - Year 13 : In the first week of the Autumn Term girls who are studying Art and/or Ceramics will be guided and supported in the writing of Personal Statements, which focus on their work and their artistic aspirations.

Nov - Jan - Year 13: Girls who wish to apply for a place on a degree course in Art and Design will need to complete and submit their UCAS application by 15th January. The requirement for a digital portfolio to be submitted at this stage usually means that it is best to do this in December or at the beginning of January in order to be able to include work completed during the second half of the Autumn Term.

Nov - Dec - Year 13: Application forms for Art Foundation courses are completed during this time.

Girls need to make sure that large-scale work in Art, Ceramics or Textiles is photographed so that it is ready to be added to their portfolio. The Art, Ceramics and Textiles Departments will help girls put together their portfolios ready for submission and interview, using materials from A level Art, plus photographs and relevant supporting material. The interview period tends to be quite spread out, so girls can keep adding to their portfolios as their work continues to develop.

Jan - Mar - Year 13: Interviews for places on Art Foundation courses and Art and Design degree courses usually take place during this time.

Alternative/Specialist Routes

Doctor, Lawyer, Vet or Dentist

The competition for places to study for these vocational degrees is fierce. Prospective Lawyers and Medics should arrange some work-shadowing with professionals during the summer before sending off their UCAS application. Also, Medics MUST have done some kind of relevant voluntary work in a health care context as evidence of a sense of vocation. (Obviously work-shadowing and voluntary work can also help students decide whether such a career is indeed for them). The following organisations have good links to help young people consider whether they might want to join the respective professions:

www.bma.org.uk

www.lawsoc.org.uk



Applicants wishing to read Law, Veterinary Science or Medicine will probably need to sit an additional examination before their interviews. Have a look at www.lnat.ac.uk (Law) and www.bmat.org.uk (Medicine/Vet) for details of which universities include the taking of these tests amongst their entrance requirements. The LNAT (Law) is taken at a test centre, very much like a driving theory test (only much harder!); the BMAT (Medicine) is taken at school at the beginning of November. In addition, aspirant Medics and Dentists will usually sit the Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT) at a centre. Information on this is available at www.ucat.ac.uk.

Those who are considering a career in Law need to understand that a first degree in Law is not a necessity. Many Lawyers have been known to advise against studying Law in this way. Law Colleges offer conversion courses for graduates with non-legal degrees: useful information can be found at <http://www.allaboutlaw.co.uk/index.php/non-law/conversion-courses/>

There is also a post-graduate medical degree course for those who study for a degree in science and then decide to study to be a doctor. Visit www.gamsatuk.org for more information.

American Universities

The official and best source of information on applying to American universities for the United Kingdom is the Fulbright Commission: www.fulbright.co.uk/study-in-the-us. Mr Doy is happy to see students by appointment to advise them on choices of institution, on the application process and on SAT/ACT tests.

Degree Apprenticeships

There are a number of excellent schemes run by many well-known organisations that offer degree apprenticeships which enable you to earn and gain practical skills, whilst studying for a degree. Please see the links on the 'Useful Links' page at the end of this booklet for more information.

Useful Links

General

<https://www.unifrog.org/> This is your first port of call for careers and UCAS info. You should record your achievements here, create course shortlists and explore career options. Your tutors will be writing your references on here. This is also where we would like you to draft your personal statement.

<https://www.ucas.com/> This is where you will make your application, but also contains lots of useful information on universities and courses.

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/> Independent rankings of universities.

<https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/> Discussion forum for all things careers and university related.

<https://www.gov.uk/student-finance> Government website to take you through everything related to financing your time at university.

Specialist Routes

www.fulbright.org.uk/ Great starting point for those interested in American Universities.

<https://www.themedicportal.com/> Useful resource for aspiring medics.

<https://oxbridgeapplications.com/> Some useful free resources for those aspiring to Oxford or Cambridge.

<https://www.bva.co.uk/> A good starting point for aspiring vets.

<https://www.dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk/> One for the dentists.

<https://www.studyabroad.com/> Good for Gap year activities and information about studying overseas.

Alternative Routes

<https://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/> Does what it says on the tin. Great starting point for those who might be considering alternative routes.

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship> Government site listing apprenticeships.

Don't forget: the undergraduate course pages on universities' websites are the most reliable resource for checking entry requirements and course details.



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