



The H Sixth FORM

# HIGHER EDUCATION 2020 Entry

Parent Booklet

Help to guide you through  
the process of your son or  
daughter's application to  
higher education

# Introduction

The aim of this booklet is to provide you with the information required to support your son or daughter through the decisions concerning Higher Education. I hope you find this useful.

**Mr Richard Taylor**

Director of Sixth Form

sixthform@hellesdon.net

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## Why go to university?

This is a question many young people and their parents ask. There are two main responses a student may give when answering this question:

- They have an academic thirst for knowledge: A desire to be taught by subject experts exploring and understanding a subject enabling them to fulfil their potential for learning; this may or may not be coupled with ...
- preparation for employment

Studying at university not only means a student learns more about their subject but also that they can demonstrate and develop many skills such as independence and commitment. Some careers need specific degrees; however, there are many that just require a person to be educated to degree level. In an increasingly competitive job market it is important that school leavers consider the different choices available to them; do the research and make an informed decision.

## How can students prepare for university?

Studying and achieving high grades are vital. However, universities would like students to arrive better prepared for independent learning. They would like students to demonstrate that they have learned how to think for themselves and to see evidence that they are interested in the wider aspects of their subjects, beyond the confines of the syllabus.

At Hellesdon Sixth Form we offer a broad range of activities and encourage students to involve themselves as fully as possible in as many as possible. Students need to be proactive about finding out about activities and taking part! Students should also listen out for other opportunities outside of school, for example, we advertise open days, summer schools, visits and competitions.

Gaining experience in particular fields is often useful. For instance, degrees in Nursing or Midwifery like students to have had experience of these areas when applying. Equally if students are interested in teaching or childcare, work experience evidence in this area shows a commitment to further study.

# So your son/daughter wants to go to university...

## What is UCAS?

- [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)
- The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. It provides information about all the courses available, grades needed, and the website has links to university websites.
- It also organises events, such as the Higher Education Convention for students, and carries out the administration needed for applications.
- The UCAS website is central to the process of applying for Higher Education and has a lot of information about university study and the application process.
- In the summer term UCAS launches '**Apply**' for the **2020** application cycle. Students will register as part of the school and must remember their log in & password.
- UCAS processes all the applications sending them onto universities and providing information to students to '**Track**' their progress.

## When does it all happen?

### Year 12

#### April:

Conference (every Wednesday) will concentrate on preparing students for university applications as well as exploring their Post Sixth Form options. They receive Information and are able to investigate different courses and universities. During these sessions students register with UCAS, linking their application to the school with a 'buzzword', issued in the summer term.

Students start writing **personal statements** and decide whether further work experience, reading, visits etc...are necessary.

Students discuss their options with their Personal Mentor and can speak to Mrs Warnock the Information Advice and Guidance Coordinator. Students receive HE updates via **email**, listing open days and other opportunities; further information is displayed on the HE noticeboard in the common room.

#### May/June:

UCAS Course search is launched online for **2020** entry.

Students visit the UCAS Higher Education (HE) Convention, held at the University of East Anglia campus, to collect prospectuses and talk to representatives from universities. There is also a Higher Education Evening at the school for parents and students.

## Year 13

September: Students receive predicted grades, finalise choices and their application.

Sept-Nov: Students submit their forms to the school, which processes them and forwards them to UCAS

Oct-April: Students attend further open days, interviews and auditions; receive offers and make decisions for their first choice and insurance choice universities.

Jan-May: The finance application needs to be complete

August: Results are in and university places finalised

## IMPORTANT DATES

**Application deadline** for professional medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and veterinary science courses, and for all courses at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge:

**School: 23 September 2019 (UCAS: 15 October 2019)**

**Application deadlines** for all other courses except those listed above:

**School: October ½ term BUT 2 December 2019 at the very latest (UCAS: 15 January 2020)**

## How strict are the Deadlines?

Early applications do show universities that students are enthusiastic and students can receive offers very soon after their applications are received. Inevitably as a deadline approaches there are a surge in UCAS forms arriving in the Sixth Form office, so early applications also have the advantage of being processed quickly within the school.

We have a high number of student applications to deal with each year. The school has early deadlines to make sure we are able to check student forms, ensuring all our students make high quality applications with the best chance of success. We cannot guarantee the level of support available to students making applications after these deadlines.

**PLEASE NOTE: The school is closed over the Christmas break and this is the reason for the school's latest deadline being early December. Applications made after this date will not be processed until the school reopens in January**

## What should students take into account when selecting universities?

Students will need to: from September:

- Narrow down their course choices; it is usual to apply to similar courses at all institutions. Students can apply to up to **four** choices for medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, veterinary science and up to **five** for other subjects.
- Consider where they wish to study. It is important that they choose the right course, but they will also need to think about where in the country they wish to be, the size of the institution, and whether they wish to be in a city or on a campus. A few students express an interest in studying abroad.
- Make sure that they are extending their experiences and knowledge of their subject beyond the A Level syllabus. For some courses, particularly those working with people, specific work experience is vital; it is important to show an interest in the wider world, and experience of leadership, working with others or volunteering is useful. This should be discussed with Personal Mentors.
- Visit some of the universities they are interested in. It is not essential to visit all on their shortlist, universities will often invite student for open days after they have applied.

## How can students/parents find out more about universities?

- The **UCAS website** ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)) lists all courses and institutions and has links to the university websites. There is also information about fees, accommodation and bursaries. It is important to consider the grades needed for each course.
- Some degrees require particular A Level subjects, and others have a short list of subjects which are appropriate. It is essential to check whether particular modules, GCSE grades or subjects are required and whether the institution accepts retakes of A Level modules (most do).

## More about Open Days:

- Parents do not have to attend open days, but universities now often put on specific sessions for parents while students are on a tour or in an interview.
- Open Days often have to be booked in advance, particularly for specific subject areas. You can usually visit a university at any time-look on the individual websites to find out. On websites you may also find virtual tours as well as videos from students and tutors about the universities.
- Students can have time off school if they fill in a leave of absence form; we ask that students do not visit more than **three** universities in term time.

## What do I need to know about Predicted Grades?

- Students will be given predicted grades specifically for their UCAS forms at the start of Year 13. These will be optimistic, but realistic, and based on Y12 Monitoring Exam results and work through the year.

## What else is going on in school?

### Interview

**Preparation:** Some universities and courses require interviews particularly, but not exclusively, Oxford, Cambridge and medicine. Students will have the opportunity to practise in the autumn term.

**Admissions Tests:** Some courses also require Additional Admission Tests; some of these are taken in school, in November. These include LNAT for Law, BMAT for medicine, and several for specific subjects at Oxford, there will be preparation sessions in school for some, but not all, of these. Other tests are not available at school and are run by other organisations (e.g. UKCAT is run by Pearson Testing and can be taken in a range of test centres)

It is the **student's responsibility** to find out whether they need to sit an admissions test and make the arrangements to do so; they must inform Mrs Gurney the Exams Officer.

**Volunteer work:** Students in the Sixth Form have a number of opportunities advertised through the year.

## What else do I need to know about the application form?

- The personal statement explains why the student wants to do the courses they are applying for and describes the qualities they have that the university will find useful and interesting. It cannot be longer than 4000 characters.
- This should be written in formal language and approximately 2/3 should be about the student's interest in the subject. Students must talk to relevant subject teachers about this part of the statement.
- Interest beyond the A Level syllabus must be described; participation in clubs and visits relevant to the subject they wish to study is an excellent way of doing this.
- Students can include information about their jobs and hobbies, if they emphasise the skills that have been acquired and how they relate to the course.
- Students will be given advice in school and receive feedback from their Personal Mentor but will appreciate parents and friends reading the statement and offering comments too.
- UCAS has a lot of advice, and downloadable pdfs with a timeline, mind map and worksheet. We will use similar resources in school.
- It is usual for all statements to be redrafted many times; students should ask for advice in drafting and redrafting the statement but it must be their own work. UCAS will check for plagiarism.
- The statement is often used to choose between students with similar grades, including when students have just missed offers.
- They must have a sensible email address to put on the form and a few details about parents are required. Parents can also be named as a contact on the form; this is useful if a student is not available on results day.
- Subject comments for the reference are written by the student's Year 12 teachers; the Personal Mentor will collate these and add comments about the student's personality, study skills, extra-curricular activities, work experience and other relevant information.

## How is the Application sent?

- The student will complete a checklist to confirm that they have filled in each section accurately. The Personal Mentor will go through this with the student.
- Students pay online and send the form electronically to the referee (**the school**). Payment is made online, directly to UCAS for their administration; for 2020 entrance this is £24 for 2 or more courses, £13 for one course (you 'top this up' by paying the £11 difference if you later decide to apply for more than one course).
- The form will be checked again by the Head of Year (HoY) and can be sent back electronically if changes needed to be made. **YOU ONLY PAY ONCE**. The reference and predicted grades are added and the form is then sent to UCAS, which sends it on to all the universities.
- Art Foundation application procedure: some colleges ask for Art Foundation applications to be sent directly to them electronically. The school will expect students to follow the same checking process that we use for UCAS.

## What happens next?

Some universities will make contact straight away and students may be made offers or invited to interviews, open days, auditions etc. However, some institutions are very slow to respond and students must be prepared to wait for quite a long time. If a student needs to contact a university they can discuss the situation with their Personal Mentor first, but the university will expect to hear directly from the student.

**If a student receives no offers** and has **not** used all their choices they can add further courses; if they have used all their choices the UCAS website will show courses with places available through a system called 'Extra'. Students should talk to their Personal Mentor and/or their Head of Year if they find themselves in this situation. Don't panic some students follow this route every year and have very successful times at university on courses they love.

After applying and receiving offers students (normally by the end of March) have until early **May** to select a **first (FIRM) choice**, with grades they and their teachers believe they can achieve, and an **INSURANCE choice**, which usually has lower grades in case they do not achieve those required for the first choice. The universities will contact the students with information about accommodation.

## Results Day

When the results are published in the summer there will be a lot of information online, but we suggest that students come into school to collect results and discuss any problems.

**If students miss the grades they need for their choices** there will be staff on hand to talk to, and access to telephones and computers to contact universities and help with using **CLEARING** to find a suitable university place.

## What about students who want to apply during a gap year?

- The school still supports students who apply through UCAS after they have left the school. They should contact **Chris Fiddament** at school by phone or email (**sixthform@hellesdon.net**) as soon as they have decided to do this.
- Students may also need to do a new application if they want to change their course once they are at university; we also have students who apply after a few years working.
- If a student went straight into work after leaving the Sixth Form and now wants to apply to university, they should ask us for an academic reference. They can also check with their current employer whether they would provide a separate reference and mention in the personal statement that the university can contact the employer for further information.

## Any problems or questions

I hope the information will be useful to you. I know it is a lot to take in and this is a big decision that can have long term consequences. If you have questions I am available to help; emailing is the best way to get in touch with me (**sixthform@hellesdon.net**) however please do look at the UCAS and university websites first, as most questions are covered here.

## How do I find out more about finance?

Student finances are not organised through the school; we will provide up to date information from Student Finance England next year. There is further information on [www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

Students should find out whether there are any bursaries available to them at their chosen institutions via the government. This can be done via the UCAS website or the university's website. Another useful website is [www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas)

### Other Websites:

Universities all have their own websites; students must check these as they will be the most up to date sources of course information. Some newspapers have their own university league tables with profiles of universities and tables for individual subjects. Also try:

[www.ucas.ac.uk](http://www.ucas.ac.uk) the main site for applications to higher education. This site has areas dedicated to students and parents and enables you to search for courses and find out about the universities.

<http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/> compares subjects at different universities, including student satisfaction, graduate employment.

[www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com) lists all official open days, and tips for making the most of them.

[www.ukcoursefinder.com](http://www.ukcoursefinder.com) has a questionnaire helping to narrow down the search for courses (students need to register).

[www.whatuni.com](http://www.whatuni.com) has student reviews and videos for different universities.

[www.oxbridgeapplications.com](http://www.oxbridgeapplications.com) A useful website for those considering application to Oxford or Cambridge.

# Hellesdon High School: UCAS PROCESS

