



**GUISELEY
SCHOOL**

The UCAS Process
at
Guiseley School

A Parent's Guide



GUISELEY SCHOOL

Dear Parent/Carer

The following information is intended to supplement the UCAS 'Parents and Guardians' information, which can be found at 'www.UCAS.com' and hopes to set out the UCAS process from the perspective of the Guseley School Sixth Form.

Choosing a future career path is one of the most important and difficult choices that your child will make, and we feel that it is important to support you in helping your child make these difficult and life defining decisions.

The advent of tuition fees means that whilst University is still by far the most popular post 18 option for our students, the cost of a degree now means that it is important for students to make careful decisions about the courses they wish to apply for. For this reason, we begin the 'next steps' in February and spend the second half of Year 12 focusing on encouraging students to make the right choices when they apply to University in Year 13. In Year 13 students complete their UCAS forms for a school deadline of October half term, allowing staff plenty of time to produce references and send the forms off in time for the official UCAS deadline of 13 January.

We also believe that it is important for students to consider all of their options before making choices that could deeply affect their futures. As such our UCAS process also covers a range of alternative options, from Employment and Apprenticeships to Gap Years.

The Sixth Form and Careers teams at Guseley School has a wealth of experience in advising students in the post 18 pathways and the UCAS application process, and we are always on hand should your child need any advice in such matters. Similarly, should you have any questions or issues you wish to speak to us about, please do not hesitate to contact the Sixth Form office.

We hope that you find this evening informative.
Yours sincerely

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Options Available Post 18

University

Most students leave Guseley Sixth Form to go to University, and despite the increasing issue of tuition fees and funding, this is still a worthwhile and popular option. A University degree is now the basic level entry requirement for a wide range of professional career paths, and as such is essential to the

prospects of many of our departing students. Added to this, the personal benefits of a higher level of education and the life experience gained in living away from home, means that University remains the most popular route for our leavers.

Apprenticeships

Higher level and degree level apprenticeships are a relatively new and developing field, which allow students to develop their skills and work towards professional qualifications 'on the job', and may appeal to students who wish to develop their careers without the financial burden of going to University. The new range of apprenticeships are certainly not a lesser option than a degree, and many of these opportunities are provided by highly reputable multinational companies, and cover a range of areas from finance and legal work to sport and media. Many of these opportunities are specifically aimed at high achieving students, although opportunities are also available for students with a range of predicted grades. It should also be noted that apprenticeship providers are often interested in an applicant's character and potential in addition to exam results.

In the initial 'UCAS introduction' sessions, students are advised of the benefits of apprenticeships and given direction to find relevant opportunities, and we will work with any unplaced students after Christmas in Year 13 to help to find them an apprenticeship if this is the path they want to take.

Apprenticeship opportunities are available from a range of sources. Primarily students should check the website 'www.apprenticeships.org.uk' and '[Unifrog](http://www.unifrog.com)' which has a national database of opportunities to apply for. In addition, a number of local companies contact the school directly looking for candidates, and details are published on the Sixth Form message screen. There are also a number of apprenticeship events organised throughout the year by different departments, and interested students are advised to attend these events for further information.

Apprenticeships can be very different, but in general the following levels show the standard of qualification available.

- Level 4: Degree level or above.
- Level 3: A level equivalent.
- Level 2: GCSE equivalent.
- Level 1: Foundation level.

'Gap Years'

A number of students decide to take a 'Gap Year', and develop their potential before going to University. Students may decide to take a Gap Year for a number of reasons from developing language skills and accruing life experience, to giving themselves a little time to decide where their future really lies. Gap Years can prove to be a very valuable experience, and students have undertaken activities as diverse as travelling the world or volunteering in third world countries, to internships in major corporations. A range of advice and information is available in school, and we organise visits from a range of outside organisations to speak to students about the opportunities available.

Foundation Courses

Some courses require students to undertake a 'foundation course' before they embark on a full degree course. Sometimes this is compulsory, and on other occasions it may be an opportunity for a student who failed to achieve the minimum entrance grades for a demanding course to improve their chances of getting on their chosen path in the future. In all cases the need for a foundation course is dependent on the institution and degree being applied for. Students applying in the following fields should be particularly aware of foundation courses.

- **Art and Design:** Many Art and Design courses require students to take a foundation year before starting a degree. Some arts universities also have a different application system that may not use the UCAS process, and many require the submission of portfolios of work. Students should check this carefully before applying.
- **Medicine:** Foundation courses are a possible (although not guaranteed) route onto Medicine for students who have not taken Biology and Chemistry at A level. (N.B. this is not generally available to students who failed to achieve the required grades in these A Levels).

Work

Not all students wish to go to University or undertake an apprenticeship after Sixth Form, and some students prefer to seek employment. Careers advice is available in school and students are more than welcome to speak to either their Form Tutor or the Director or Deputy Director of KS5 about careers advice.

Study Abroad

With the advent of higher tuition fees in UK Universities, a number of students are beginning to look elsewhere to study. This may enable them to either save money on fees, access competitive courses with lower grades, or to get a wider experience for their money. For example, many EU Universities have cheaper fees than UK Universities, and have a good selection of courses in English, although it must be noted that access to student finance may be limited when studying abroad. Every year we have a talk from a company representing international universities, and will do all we can to help students apply abroad if this is what they want to do.

Who Provides Advice?

The Form Tutor

Your child's Form Tutor is their primary advisor in school. Sixth Form tutors are trained every year on developments in the UCAS process and should therefore be able to advise you on a range of issues, from University or course choices to completing the UCAS form.

The vast majority of enrichment sessions between the summer term in Year 12 and October half term in Year 13 are dedicated to the UCAS process, and students are expected to attend these in order to get the best advice possible. In some sessions students will be addressed as a year group on issues such as gap years, researching courses, or how to complete their UCAS forms. Students who are absent from enrichment lessons and registration therefore risk missing vital information, which will inevitably hinder their ability to apply to University successfully.

The Form Tutor also produces the overall 'UCAS reference', based on both subject references provided over summer and their knowledge of a student's personal development. Once again, students who miss registration and enrichment on a regular basis take the risk that their Form Tutor will be unable to write a comprehensive reference for them.

Form Tutors can also advise students on apprenticeships or work and in enrichment lessons a program for students who are not going to University will be ongoing. It is therefore important that ALL students attend enrichment, even those who are not interested in further study.

Director and Deputy Director of KS5

The Director of KS5 (Miss Ogden) has overall responsibility for the UCAS process and will speak to the year group on a regular basis during enrichment sessions. Every reference written by form tutors is also individually checked and if required edited by the Director or Deputy Director of KS5.

The Director of KS5 (Miss Ogden) is ultimately responsible for the entire process.

Miss Ogden and Mr Barron can organise mock interviews for any student who wishes to have one.

Students or parents are welcome to speak to either the Director or Deputy Directors of KS5 about the UCAS process and their choices at any time.

Other Guidance Available

Work Experience: Traditionally, some courses such as medicine and veterinary medicine have required evidence of relevant work experience from students. In response to the pandemic, a range of virtual online work experience opportunities have been developed and advertised. Help in finding these is available from the 6th form and careers teams. Those students interested in applying for medicine and dentistry are advised that work experience does not necessarily have to be directly related to the course in order to be valuable in demonstrating their suitability.

Careers Advice: Appointments can be made from September with the school's careers advisor for advice.

Subject Tutors: Subject tutors are often the experts in a particular field and may be able to provide useful advice on courses and applications. Please do be aware however that subject tutors may not be aware of the current UCAS process, and as such students should ensure that their Form Tutor checks any final personal statements or reinforces any advice.

NB: Whilst we have a comprehensive network of advice available to students, it must be emphasised that students are expected to be proactive in seeking advice where needed.

The Guiseley UCAS Timeline

Year 12:

February: Students are introduced to Post 18 options choices during career drop down day events.

March - July

Students are advised on researching courses and universities, developing skills for personal statements and interviews, and exploring the options available to them. This is primarily done during enrichment and registration time, so attendance in Form and enrichment is essential.

May: UCAS opens. Students can register with UCAS using the buzzword Guiseley27

June: Year 12 end of year assessments; results to inform predicted grades.

University Open Days begin.

Subject Tutors complete subject references, to be returned to Form Tutors in the first week of September.

Students are expected to continue research into University places and develop skills, work experience and subject knowledge to put into personal statements.

Year 13: September - October

First week of September: UCAS starts to accept completed UCAS application forms.

Students complete their UCAS forms under the guidance of Director KS5 and Form Tutors. This is done in enrichment during form time, so once again, attendance is vital.

Practice interviews begin for Medics/Dentistry/Veterinary and Oxbridge applicants to meet early deadline.

Director/Deputy Director KS5 produces references for Oxbridge and Medicine /Dentistry/Veterinary applicants to meet early deadline.

15 October: Official UCAS deadline for Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary applications.

October Half Term: School deadline for completion and submission of UCAS form. Any forms completed after this date cannot be guaranteed to be sent off quickly.

October - December

Half Term: Form Tutors complete UCAS references.

Director/Deputy Director of KS5 checks and edits references. UCAS forms sent off to UCAS.

Week before Christmas: Final school deadline for any late applications. Any applications not received by Christmas holidays cannot be guaranteed to be sent off in time for the UCAS final deadline.

13 January: Official UCAS deadline for applications. Any applications received after this date are considered at the Universities discretion.

January - May

Offers are returned.

When all offers are known, students then accept a firm and conditional offer.

Students without offers can apply for more courses through UCAS extra.

May: Deadline for applying to funding to ensure it arrives by September

June: Deadline for replying to offers (except in exceptional circumstances)

Mid-August: A level results announced: Clearing begins for students who fail to make offers.

A Few Notes On The UCAS Process at Guiseley School

Submitting UCAS forms: The School has set an internal deadline for October Half Term for the completion of UCAS forms. This is an early deadline, and has been set to give Form Tutors time to produce references and the Deputy Director of KS5 time to check the UCAS forms.

Unfortunately, this is a time consuming process, and as a result we cannot guarantee that all forms will be sent off to UCAS immediately. Whilst it is true that some Universities do make offers before the January UCAS deadline, they do have to consider all applications made before the 13 January, and make appropriate offers. We promise that we will endeavour to send off your child's UCAS application as quickly as possible, although we ask for your patience and understanding in giving us a little time to get through the large volume of forms that come in after October Half term.

Forms submitted after October Half Term: Some students will of course still need time to make decisions on their courses beyond October half term. Any student who is in this situation should

make sure that the 6th form team is aware of the situation, so that special consideration and advice can be given. Due to the large volume of UCAS forms, any forms received after October Half Term will have to be dealt with when time allows, and there is the potential for a considerable delay (unless special circumstances have been discussed).

Forms Submitted after Christmas: Forms submitted after the last week of the Autumn term risk not being submitted on time to UCAS, owing to the very small window in January for processing and completing the references. Any student who wishes to submit an application after the Christmas break must inform the 6th form team of the situation before the Christmas holidays, to ensure that the form is processed in time.

Enrichment: Between the summer term in Year 12 and October half term in Year 13 PM Form Time is almost entirely dedicated to the UCAS process. Attendance in these sessions is essential.

Non UCAS Students: Students who are not applying to University are still expected to be using the time set aside time to consider their future options. This may involve researching apprenticeship and job opportunities; planning to develop the skills needed for an application; seeking careers advice or filling out applications for other courses or jobs. In our experience a significant number of students who initially decide not to apply to University change their minds at the last minute. It is therefore important that all students attend the year group UCAS briefings, so that they are able to apply late if they decide they want to.

Oxbridge Students: All applications for Oxford and Cambridge must be submitted before the early deadline of **15 October**. Please note that this is the UCAS national (not school) deadline for such applications. Students applying to Oxbridge will also be required to attend rigorous academic interviews and either sit entrance exams or submit exceptional examples of written work. Assistance with interviews and preparation for the application is available from the 6th form team. In addition, it is advisable that students have an excellent subject knowledge and spend a considerable amount of time, before applying, developing this to a level well above and beyond that of a 'normal' A level student. Students who have identified that they are considering applying to Oxford/Cambridge are invited to fortnightly meetings with Miss Ogden to support with applications. Applicants to Oxbridge are advised to participate in the schools Oxbridge/ Medics workshops, which include the production of a summer project.

Any Oxbridge student who wishes to seek advice on their application is welcome to speak to either the Director or Deputy Director of KS5, although it is stressed that the impetus is on the student to seek advice. Mock interviews can be arranged and undertaken by experienced subject specialists.

In recent years we have an excellent record of sending students to Oxford and Cambridge, although it must be said that even the brightest student may be disappointed. In our experience the best way to prepare for interview is for the student to engage in high level discussion at every opportunity, as it seems to be those candidates who are most confident in debate and discussion that are successful.

Applications for Medicine, Veterinary Medicine and Dentistry: All applications must be submitted before the early deadline of **15 October**. Please note that this is a UCAS national deadline.

Applicants for the above courses need to be exceptionally academic, with most offers being at least AAA. Chemistry is essential, and Biology sometimes essential. In addition, Medics need to demonstrate a character suitable to the pressures of a medical career; the ability to perform under pressure, to handle difficult circumstances and challenging situations and relate well to people. For this reason, the application process is rigorous and requires good interview skills. Practice interviews can be arranged and are carried out by experienced specialists.

Students who do not have the correct set of A levels can apply for a Medicine foundation course to attempt to win a place on a medical degree, and students who fail to achieve straight 'A's may be able to start a Biomedical Science degree and convert, however neither route is guaranteed to result in acceptance as a Medic.

Other Points

Subject Knowledge:

Applications are usually enhanced by a solid reflection of a student's subject knowledge. A good way to develop this is through extra reading and discussion of subject related issues.

Interviews:

An increasing number of courses now interview students. This is an obvious requirement for vocational courses such as Education, Medicine or Nursing, but many academic courses also now interview.

Mock interviews can be arranged through the 6th form team and will be delivered by a specialist interviewer.

Predicted Grades:

Predictions are made by subject teachers based on performance in the Year 12 exams and a reflection of the progress made by students in Year 12. Tutors will always be optimistic but also must be realistic when predicting grades. Universities will use these predictions along with GCSE results when offering places. If there are any issues with predicted grades, please see the 6th form team.

Personal Statements:

The personal statement is the most important part of the UCAS form, where students are given the opportunity to outline their suitability for their chosen courses and 'sell themselves' to potential admissions tutors. It is important that students take a great deal of time and effort in completing this section of the UCAS form, as in many cases it is the personal statement which can make or break an application. Students begin to consider what skills they need to reflect in their personal statements in the summer term in Year 12, and generally produce their statements in September of Year 13. Form Tutors provide guidance on this during enrichment sessions in form time.

Open Days:

Every University is different, and we feel it is important that students make an informed choice before committing to an institution or course. Because of this, students are able to take time off school to attend open days. Some open days may be a virtual event. If students wish to attend an open day, parents/carers need to inform the attendance team of which Open Day they are attending and confirming their absence, before the open day. Some open days are advertised on the Sixth Form Common room notice board, although most open day details can be found by contacting the relevant institutions.

Whilst we would encourage students to attend some open days, we ask that students consider the impact of absences on their studies, and ensure that the number of days attended do not become excessive.

Fees and Finance:

Many Universities charge fees in excess of £9,000 pa, although these fees are not payable up front. The government is bringing in measures to encourage some courses to charge less than

this and a consideration in choosing a particular University may be the level of fees charged. In addition to the fees students can apply for loans for living costs and may be able to apply for bursaries or scholarships from individual institutions.

Students apply for finance through the 'student finance' website www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance, which will link their application to their local authority. Information on bursaries and scholarships can be obtained from individual institutions, and such funding is provided at the discretion of the institutions themselves.

As finance is not organised through the school, issues relating to finance should be addressed to the student finance authorities, and for bursaries and scholarships, to the individual institution concerned.

Completing the UCAS Form.

Please note that the UCAS website cannot upload forms to institutions until **the first week of September**. Students will be given comprehensive instructions on completing their UCAS forms on the first enrichment sessions in September, and we ask that they wait until this session has been held before starting their application. Instructions will be given to the students, but also be available on the School Website.

Useful Websites

UCAS: www.ucas.co.uk

UCAS is the main application website. Students use this site to submit their UCAS application. They can also use this to research courses and a wide range of information relating to university study and applications. There are plenty of 'how to' videos and tutorials.

Student Finance: www.gov.uk/get-undergraduate-student-loan

Students and parents need to fill in the appropriate sections of this website to apply for finance. This website contains information about student finance available from the government. It can calculate how much finance a student is entitled to and gives information on government funding for students. Please note that individual universities also provide their own bursaries and scholarships, along with other organisations such as the Sutton trust. These should be applied for separately, using the individual organisations websites.

Unifrog: www.unifrog.org

Unifrog is the main tool used at school for researching careers, university and apprenticeships. It has a wide range of applications from advanced course and apprenticeship search options, through to personal statement writing tools, information on a range of bursaries, and a huge amount of information on different careers and courses. Students are all given a password to access this site.

Apprenticeships: www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch

The government website listing all apprenticeships currently available. Please be aware that the application dates vary, and do not always follow the traditional academic calendar.

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

A useful website with information on apprenticeships, employment and gap years. Many gap year opportunities and apprenticeship vacancies are listed here.