



**Sixth Form Students  
Higher Education Guide  
2013 Entry**



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CATERHAM SCHOOL

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# THE PARENT PAGE

Many parents at this stage of their child's life are generally very confused about the next stage. They are baffled by an array of acronyms ranging from AS Levels, A2 Levels and UCAS and are rather perplexed by concepts like the collegiate system, joint honours, modular courses and clearing.

Well there is good news. This guide is an attempt to help both parent and student navigate the minefield that is Higher Education in the U.K. and many things, I hope, will be explained and much of the jargon will be 'busted'!

Now I have to be honest, the value of this publication will vary according to parent and student. I am, for example, aware that many of you have had older children / siblings who have already succeeded in securing a place at university. For you, the guide will act more as a reminder of what needs to be done but it will also contain a significant amount of new information (with this government, things move fast in education!).

Also, we are faced with the situation whereby some parents have themselves been to university whilst others have not. The temptation for the graduates amongst you is to hark back to the glory days of the 1970s (and 1980s for some!) and to give advice that was pertinent to those heady days. Alas, the Higher Education sector has moved on since your (and my) day and you will need to re-acquaint yourselves with much of the territory.

May I therefore be bold enough to offer this advice to parents?

- Remember that your sons and daughters are actually **TEENAGERS!**
- Be mindful of the pressures that they are under from this process and the overbearing examination system that they endure.
- Try not to push or pull too hard in a particular direction unless they are with you.
- Take a positive interest but, at times, hover in the background!
- Offer opinions by all means, but they are best offered when they are sought.
- Conduct research for your child but ensure that they take the lead throughout the process.
- Understand that the reputation of some universities has changed since 1973!
- Be realistic about the options pursued by your child; over ambition is unhelpful.
- Realize that competition for places is fierce, particularly for independent school students.
- Visit universities with your child and offer lifts to others if possible (particularly boarders).
- Proof read their personal statements; PLEASE!
- Insist (gently!) that they keep you informed of developments.
- Seek advice from others and from the school as much as possible.
- **BE PATIENT!**

# A GLOSSARY OF USEFUL TERMS

Below are words / terms that should prove useful:

**Adjustment:**

If your examination results have exceeded the conditions of your firm (CF) choice then you can hold your CF offer for 5 days whilst you look for a course requiring higher grades.

**Admissions tutor / officer:**

These individuals are best contacted if you need help or advice about admission to a particular university. You will only really need to contact them if and when you have been offered a place at the university that they represent.

**Apply:**

The online system for applying for university.

**Campus:**

A campus is a site on which a university is located. It tends to describe a university whose buildings are clustered in one place rather than scattered throughout a city or town.

**Centigrade:**

This is undertaken by all Lower Sixth students and acts as a launch for the UCAS process. It gives advice about careers, courses and universities.

**Clearing:**

The process (run by UCAS) begins as soon as the A2 results are released in August. It is there to assist students who have missed required grades, or who hold no offers, to find university courses which still have places available.

**Collegiate system:**

A university made up of separate colleges which together comprise the university, is called collegiate. In such universities, the college plays a crucial part in the lives of students. The only true collegiate universities in the U.K. are Oxford, Cambridge and Durham.

**Combined / joint honours degrees:**

These are degrees where usually 2 subjects are taken e.g. History and Politics OR Business Studies and French.

**Conditional Offer:**

An offer made to a student with certain academic criteria attached.

**Deferred entry:**

This occurs if you decide to take a gap year and it simply means that you have decided to delay taking your place at university, usually for a year.

**Degree grades:**

Most U.K. undergraduates will emerge after 3 or 4 years with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or a Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree. These can be classified thus, from best to worse:

- A First
- An Upper Second; 2:1
- A Lower Second: 2:2
- A Third A pass (usually granted without honours).

**Extra:**

If you have applied for all five of your choices and not received an offer, then you can apply through Extra, one course at a time.

**Firm Offer (CF):**

This is your first choice university offer that you accept through UCAS.

**Freshers:**

A term deriving from the American for a student in his / her first year at university, a Freshman.

**Insurance offer (CI):**

This is your second choice university offer that you accept through UCAS.

**Matriculation:**

This is the process of officially enrolling and starting at university usually marked by a photograph and / or dinner.

**Modular courses:**

In our day, most university students were faced with a rather daunting set of 'finals' whereby all 3 years work was assessed in a mad binge of final exams. A modular approach is increasingly common whereby students are assessed on a more regular basis in module.

**Open Days:**

These are organized by universities as a means by which prospective students can gain an insight into a particular university. They usually take place in June / July & September / October and information on specific Open Days can be sought at [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com)

**'Redbrick' Universities:**

These universities were built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Broadly speaking they are all the so-called modern universities e.g. Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Reading.

**Russell Group of Universities:**

This group is considered a kind of 'Ivy League' of the most prestigious universities in the U.K. There are 19 universities in the Russell Group. There a variety of other university groups as well.

**Sandwich courses:**

These courses integrate academic studies with industrial, commercial or professional training. For example, it will involve 2 years of study, followed by a year in work and then a further year on the course.

**Track:**

This is the online system through which you monitor the status of your application. You will receive your offers through this system, reply to offers and make any amendments to your contact details.

**U.C.A.S.**

The universities and Colleges Admissions Service is the central body (based in Cheltenham) through which all students must apply to gain access to a U.K. university.

**UCAS Tariff:**

A numerical offer system used instead of grades, see table below.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A2</b>
<b>A*</b>	n/a	140
<b>A</b>	60	120
<b>B</b>	50	100
<b>C</b>	40	80
<b>D</b>	30	60
<b>E</b>	20	40

**Unconditional Offer:**

An offer given to an applicant who has already satisfied the entry requirements - usually a student applying post results.

# ACADEMIC MATTERS AND DECISIONS

The first decision that will be faced before the start of the Upper Sixth is the choice of **A2 Level subjects**. Most students will drop from 4 to 3 subjects in the Upper Sixth.

*Remember – you can make your final decision at the start of the Upper Sixth*

## ***How do you decide which subject to drop?***

- AS Level grades will help to make the final decision. The school will usually require that you achieve **A – C grades at AS** in order to continue with the subject at A2.
- Remember that the academic demands of A2 are more challenging than AS so you may simply decide to drop your weakest subject.
- You should also consider the level of interest that you have in the subject; only continue with a subject that inspires genuine intellectual curiosity.
- Consider the extent to which subjects may link to your university or career plans. It is acceptable to drop subjects that have no bearing on your chosen university course.

*If you are still unsure, please discuss the matter with the relevant heads of department.*

A number of students will be encouraged to continue with 4 subjects at A2 Level. These tend to be students doing Maths and Further Maths or those who have a second language like German or Russian. If you are thinking of taking 4 subjects in the Upper Sixth, please see Mr Fahey / Mr Lesser first so that we can confirm time-table arrangements.

Equally, there will be students who may wish to drop 2 AS Level subjects and take on a completely new AS subject in the Upper 6<sup>th</sup>. This is fine so long as you first discuss it with Mr. Fahey / Mr Lesser and on the understanding that your request fits into the time-table.

Finally, there will be some students who struggle at AS Level and will find that they have qualified for fewer than 3 A2 Level subjects. If that is the case, they will spend some time with Mr. Fahey / Mr Lesser/ Mr James/ Mrs McVitty/ Mrs Brown in August discussing options. Those options may include:

- Taking 2 subjects at A2 Level and re-taking an AS subject.
- Taking 2 subjects at A2 Level and opting for a new AS subject.

In extreme circumstances, a student may be asked to consider re-taking the year. Such a decision will be made in conjunction with the Headmaster, the Director of Sixth Form, Head of Year, student and parent.

# UNIVERSITY MATTERS

From about January in the Lower Sixth, students at Caterham begin to plan for university admissions through something called UCAS. This stands for the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service and all relevant details can be found on their web-site:

**[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)**

Students often forget or underestimate the help that schools and teachers offer them. I will consequently set out all the various aspects of UCAS advice that has been given so far (or will soon be given out) in order to remind both students and parents that a good deal of work has already taken place this year.

## **ADVICE / INFORMATION GIVEN SO FAR:**

### **Centigrade:**

- All Lower Sixth students sit the Centigrade Questionnaire in the Lower Sixth.
- It provides some introductory advice about courses, universities and career options.
- All members of the Lower Sixth will have follow up meetings with the Head of Careers, Mrs Clare Brown.
- Further advice will be provided, as will information about specific courses and universities.

### **Upper Sixth Briefings:**

- Most members of the Upper Sixth will give introductory talks about their UCAS experiences and offer advice about many different subject courses. These will take place at various times during the Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth years.

### **Career Workshops:**

- All students will be given information about workshops at universities. See [www.london.ac.uk/tasters](http://www.london.ac.uk/tasters) for more information.
- A number of our students attend taster courses in subjects like Law, Business, Nursing, Forensics, Working with Animals and Psychology. See [www.workshop-uk.net](http://www.workshop-uk.net) for more details.
- The Biology department encourage all those interested in Medicine to attend specialised courses. See [www.medlink-uk.org](http://www.medlink-uk.org) for more details.
- The Physics Department encourage all those interested in Technology and Engineering to apply for Headstart courses that run at various universities. See [www.headstartcourses.org.uk](http://www.headstartcourses.org.uk) for more information.

### **Tutors:**

- All tutors will have discussions with their tutees about potential career and university options.
- The tutor is responsible for writing the highly significant UCAS Reference and will therefore play a crucial role in the next few months.

### **Oxbridge Meeting:**

- Preliminary Oxbridge information will be given to the entire year group at an assembly.
- A Lower Sixth Briefing session on Oxbridge will be held.

- Pupils will then be invited to opt into the Oxbridge Programme by writing a letter of application and a follow up meeting will take place.
- OCs currently studying at Oxford/Cambridge will give talks about their experiences.

#### **Open Days/University Visits:**

- **We recommend that students start to attend Open Days at universities during the summer term of Lower Sixth as well as during the first two terms of the Upper Sixth. Permission will be given for a maximum of two Exeat days per term for these visits as we are conscious of the need to protect this valuable teaching time.**
- A number of departments have organized trips to universities including: Classics, Languages and R.S.
- Many students have also, informally, (often through older brothers or sisters) visited a wide range of universities.
- Subject staff will take a group of students to Oxford/Cambridge University during spring.
- See [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com) and individual university websites for more information.

#### **Heads of Department and teachers:**

- Advice has also been forthcoming from within departments about both courses and universities.
- Some departments have furthermore arranged relevant work experience for a small number of students.

#### **Work Experience:**

- An encouraging number of students have undertaken or booked work experience for the holidays particularly for vocational courses like medicine, law, teaching physiotherapy etc.
- The Careers Department has also been able to arrange some work experience for students.

#### **Caterham Award:**

- By July 2012, all Lower Sixth students will have completed 3 terms of the Caterham Award. This will be invaluable in the preparation of Personal Statements and also for tutors in order to complete UCAS references.

It is clear then, that a good deal has already taken place in terms of UCAS information and advice. Some students, however, have not made the most of what has been on offer and are urged to make up for lost ground.

The next section will outline what will happen next.

# WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Outlined below are the various stages of the process from June 2012 to August 2013.

*This may all seem a long way off; but believe me, time flies very quickly and the whole thing will soon be upon you. So please get thinking, get researching and get organized!*

## June 2012:

- AS exams.
- Assemblies run by the Sixth Form team outlining the mechanisms of the UCAS process.
- Advice clinics run by Sixth Form tutors, teachers, Head of Careers and the Head of Year.
- Open Days to attend.
- Meeting for all potential Oxbridge candidates with Mr. Lesser.
- Meeting for all potential Vets, Medics, Physios or Dentists with Miss Henry.
- Talk by ex Caterham students on 'taking a gap year'.
- Teachers to pass subject references to tutors.
- References to complete for Oxbridge and Medical students by tutors.

## July 2012:

- UCAS and Higher Education talks and workshops during final week of term. This includes an introduction to the online application system, 'Apply', and talks from Admissions Tutors and Alumni.
- Universities should be visited during the summer holidays.

## August 2012:

- AS results on **Thursday 16 August**.
- Interviews with Mr Fahey/Mr. Lesser/Mr James/Mrs Brown/Mrs McVitty on Thursday 16 and Friday 17 August to discuss choices / options.
- A2 options considered and discussed.
- Tutors write individual UCAS References.

## September 2012:

- A2 choices finalized in consultation with Heads of Department.
- Timetables issued by start of term; you will be given 2 weeks to change your mind.
- University Person Statement Workshops - First draft of Personal Statement to be completed.
- Final choices of universities to be made (5 in total except Medics, Vets and Dentists who are allowed 4)
- All references to be completed by tutors.
- Electronic UCAS tutorials given to explain how the system works; each tutor group will nominate 2 'experts' to coordinate this.
- By the end of September all Oxbridge, Medicine and Law applications should be sent off.

**October 2012:**

- By 15<sup>th</sup> October applications completed for popular universities including: York, Warwick, Nottingham, Leeds, Durham, and Bristol.
- By half-term, 90% of applications will be submitted.
- Mock interviews for Oxbridge / Medicine (and all others who need it) to be conducted by teaching staff.
- Mock interviews for all students to be conducted by a panel of parents and external interviewers, organized by Mrs. Brown.

**November 2012:**

- Mock interviews for all students to be conducted by a panel of parents and external interviewers, organized by Mrs. Brown.
- First university offers arrive.
- Open Days for universities where offers have been gained.

**December 2012:**

- Oxbridge interviews (DO NOT book early skiing holidays!).
- Revision for January modules and re-takes.

**January – April 2013:**

- January modules and re-takes.
- Most offers and rejections are received between January and April of the upper 6<sup>th</sup> year.
- Students are to make their final 2 university choices; a first choice (firm offer) and reserve university (insurance offer) must be identified and UCAS notified.

**May – July 2013:**

- Study leave and EXAMS.

**August 2013:**

- A2 Level results.
- Clearing system operates for those students who have not obtained offers or who have missed their conditional grades.

*Late applications can be submitted to UCAS between 15<sup>th</sup> January and 30<sup>th</sup> June, but universities are no longer obliged to consider them.*

**We STRONGLY advise students to complete their UCAS applications in the autumn term.**

# CHOOSING YOUR COURSE

There is often, at this stage, the temptation to think of universities before considering courses. This is understandable as Sixth Form students hear about how wonderful university X is or how good the social life is at university Y. ***Avoid that temptation and think course first.***

Remember, you are going to spend the next 3, 4 or even 6 years studying this subject or subjects so choose wisely. There are nearly 45,000 courses on offer so it may not be easy.

Clearly there are some in the Lower Sixth who have already made firm decisions, mainly about vocational courses like medicine, physiotherapy, speech therapy etc. For the rest of you, it is worth considering the advice outlined below. This is particularly important if you are considering a course that you have never studied before e.g. Psychology, Law, and Sociology etc.

## **Follow your instincts and interests:**

- If you have a clear interest in a subject and you know that you would enjoy the subject matter at university then it is seriously worth considering for that reason alone. The best advice is often to simply follow your intellectual curiosity.

## **Discuss options with your teachers:**

- Don't wait for a teacher to approach you; take the initiative. Make a point of discussing options with relevant staff (teachers, tutors, year heads or the head of careers). The next section gives you an idea of the people you should speak with for advice.

## **Consult relevant publications and websites (all available in the careers library):**

- 'UCAS The Big Guide' or [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)
- University Prospectuses
- The Times Good University Guide
- [www.education.guardian.co.uk/universityguide](http://www.education.guardian.co.uk/universityguide)
- University web-sites
- The Virgin Guide to Higher Education.
- Careers Department: for specialist guides e.g. '*Degree Course Offers*' by Brian Heap or the *Trotman Course Guides*.

## **Read through your Centigrade form:**

- Much good advice is contained in the Centigrade form you have been given. Make sure you read it and follow the advice if applicable.

## **Consider possible Career Paths:**

- It is asking much to expect most 17 year olds to know the career they wish to follow. However, if you have a broad idea, then that may help to narrow your course options. Always seek advice first.

## RANDOM REMINDERS:

- **Remember** - if at this stage (like many others) you have no clear idea about a career path, then opt for a degree and course that you are likely to **enjoy**.
- **Remember** - be aware that many employers simply want to employ **graduates**, irrespective of the particular subject of their degree. For example, most accountants did NOT study accounting and finance at university.
- **Remember** - to check carefully the **course requirements**. Do not make the mistake for example of applying to do a degree in Physiotherapy when you did not opt for Biology at AS Level. ALL good Physiotherapy courses now insist on Biology!
- **Remember** - that some degree courses take not 3, but **4 years** to complete. This is usually the case for Scottish universities and for Language degrees.
- **Remember** - that some degree courses have a '**year out**' in the middle of the course (often abroad) extending the degree to 4 years. This is the case with Languages and increasingly for subjects like Politics where some courses offer a year in Washington or Brussels.
- **Remember** - to research carefully the meaning and expectations of **new courses** like Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology. For instance, one student was shocked to learn that she had to complete a module in Statistics as part of her Psychology degree.
- **Remember** - to consider **Joint Honours degrees** if you really enjoy 2 particular subjects. Many joint degrees are excellent and can give you more scope long term. For example Sports *with* Business Management or History *with* French can be just right for some students.
- **Remember** - to **be realistic** about your courses and destinations. There is no point in applying to universities whose entry grade requirements you have no real hope of matching. For example, Medical courses usually require straight A grades or AAB. You will not get offers unless you are likely to achieve those grades.
- **Remember** - to always **check with us** first before applying.

And finally... a word on predicted grades.

**Predicted grades** are an important aspect of the application process. These are submitted by Heads of Department and predictions are made after lengthy consultation with teachers and following detailed examination of performance data including GEISTS, test results, mock grades etc. The School will tend to err on the generous side in its predictions aware of the importance attached to them in terms of gaining good offers.

# TEACHER ADVICE (Courses)

In order to broaden the UCAS information given to students, the following teachers have agreed to act as course advisors. We strongly recommend that you discuss options with them and, in particular, if you are looking at a university course that is not currently taught in the Sixth Form (subjects marked with \*).

**Accounting\* / Finance\*:** Mr. Fahey

**American Studies:** Mr Lesser

**Archaeology\* / Egyptology\*:** Mrs Brown

**Architecture\*:** Mrs Kyle / Miss Church

**Art:** Mrs. Kyle, Miss Church or Mr. Sherrington

**Biology / Zoology\*:** Mr. Quinton

**Business /Management:** Mrs. Wallace or Mr James or Mr Smith or Mr Lesser

**Chemistry / Biochemistry:** Mr Keyworth / Dr Burnside

**Classics:** Mr Waite

**Dentistry\*:** Miss Henry

**Design Technology:** Mr. Wilkinson

**Dietetics\*:** Mrs. Brown / Mr Lesser

**Drama / Performing Arts:** Mr Thompson or Ms McMullin

**Economics:** Mr. Fahey

**Education\*/ Teaching\*:** Mr. Clark / Mr Lesser / Miss Henry

**Engineering\*:** Mr. Dannatt / Mr Jaundrill

**English:** Mr. Killingworth

**Geography:** Mr. Bailey / Mr Terrell

**History of Art\*:** Mrs Kyle

**History:** Mr. Salem / Mr Lesser / Mr Mills / Mr Cooper

**Information Technology / Computing:** Mr. Bailey

**Land Economy\*:** Mr. Bailey

**Languages:** Language staff

**Law\* / Criminology\* / Forensics\*:** Mr. Clark, Mrs Brown or Mr. Lesser

**Maths:** Mr. Jaundrill, Mr Todd or Mrs Stowell

**Medicine\* / Pharmacy\*:** Miss Henry, Mr Lesser or Mrs Brown

**Philosophy\*:** Dr. Mearkle

**Physics:** Mr Dannant

**Physiotherapy\*:** Mrs Brown

**Politics / International Relations\*:** Mr. Clark / Mr Lesser

**PPE\*:** Mr. Salem or Mr Lesser

**Psychology:** Mr King

**Social and Political Science\*:** Mr. Clark / Mr Lesser

**Sociology\*:** Mr Lesser

**Speech Therapy\*:** Mrs. Brown

**Sport / Physical Education:** Ms. Leach

**Theology\*:** Rev. Mearkle

**Veterinary Science / Animal\*:** Miss Henry / Mrs Brown

**War Studies\*:** Mr. Lesser

# CHOOSING YOUR UNIVERSITY

Most of you will apply to **5 universities**. Before doing so, there are a number of factors to be considered. Most are outlined below.

## **Geographic Area:**

- Where in the U.K. would you like to be? Does Scotland or Wales appeal? Would you rather stay in and around the South East? Is it important to get as far away from home as possible!

## **Campus or City:**

- Would you prefer the bright lights of a Manchester, Birmingham or Leeds? Would you rather the more self-contained, easily accessible Reading, Exeter or Kent?

## **Big or Small:**

- Is big or small more beautiful for you? Does the fact that Manchester has the biggest concentration of students in Western Europe appeal? Would you rather apply to a smaller university in a smaller town where you feel less anonymous?

## **Old or New:**

- Are you seduced by the thought of studying in the shadow of ancient buildings, majestic museums and stunning churches? Would you rather be surrounded by more functional structures, modern amenities and state of the art lecture theatres?

## **Non-academic factors:**

- Are sports facilities critical? Is it important for the university to have a good reputation in music and drama? Will the quality of the local 'club' scene be decisive? Is it desirable to be near a national park so that you can keep up your interest in outdoor pursuits? Is it important that there is an active OTC (university equivalent of the CCF)?

## **Financial Considerations:**

- It is worth stressing that some towns / cities are more expensive than others in terms of cost of living. London, Oxford, Bath, Bristol, Cambridge and Edinburgh tend to be on the expensive side whilst Hull, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle or Sheffield would be cheaper than the average.

## **Accommodation:**

- If this is an important consideration then make sure you check that the university offers suitable accommodation to all freshers.

## **Reputation and academic excellence:**

- There is a wealth of information published that gives detailed information on universities. See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/universityguide> or [www.thetimes.co.uk/gug](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/gug)

## ***In order to further narrow your choice, remember the following:***

### **Friends, family, Old Caterhamians:**

Speak with as many people as you can about university destinations. Clearly, if you are considering Leeds, it is well worth chatting with someone who has studied there.

### **Teachers:**

See the next section and speak with teachers about relevant universities.

### **Web-sites:**

Search all possible universities on the web (a simple Google search is best). Some universities have '**virtual tours**' on their web-sites; these are well worth exploring.

### **Prospectuses:**

Send off for as many relevant prospectuses as you need. These can be ordered on-line through the university web-sites and are **FREE**. Also worth requesting copies of **alternative prospectuses** as these tend to give an ever better insight to university life.

### **Visits / Open Days:**

Make sure that you visit at least 2 or 3 universities, in particular your final few choices.

## **RANDOM REMINDERS:**

- **Remember** – to **be realistic** with your chosen universities. Not everyone will have the grades to apply to Oxford, Nottingham or Warwick.
- **Remember** – if you are not sure how your results are likely to go then it is worth including a **spread of universities** in your final list of 6. By this I mean 2 top, 2 middle and 2 less strong universities. In so doing, you may get offers from the best but equally you will have a couple of insurance choices as back up.
- **Remember** – **Dentistry, Medical** and **Veterinary** applicants are restricted to a maximum of 4 choices, but can use the remaining 1 space to apply to other courses (which should of course relate to their main choices).
- **Remember** – that there is some concern about the prospects of independent school pupils at some universities like **Bristol**. There is some truth in this especially in subjects like English, History and Law. This should not, however, deter you as long as you have researched your options thoroughly.

And finally...

**Remember** – it is important that you see Mr Fahey, Mr. Lesser or Mrs Brown to talk tactics before you apply!

# TEACHER ADVICE (Universities)

Please make a point of seeing the following members of staff if you want any further information about the universities outlined below:

**Aberdeen:** Mrs Stowell

**Brighton:** Mrs Lomas

**Cambridge:** Mr. Clark (Queens'), Mr Jaundill, Mr Killingworth, Mr Lesser, Mrs Mesher (Robinson)

**Durham:** Miss Henry.

**Exeter:** Mr. Taylor

**Imperial:** Mr. Dannatt

**KCL:** Dr Burnside

**Lancaster:** Mr. Lesser

**Leeds:** Mr. Thompson.

**Liverpool:** Mr Mills

**London (UCL, LSE, Queen Mary, Goldsmiths):** Mr. Fahey

**Loughborough:** Miss Francis, Mrs Leach

**Manchester:** Mr. Ogilvie

**Newcastle:** Miss Henry

**Oxford:** Mr. Salem (Lady Margaret Hall), Miss. Dawrant (Merton), Mr. Quinton, Mr Lesser, Mr Todd (Worcester), Mrs Carpenter (St Edmund Hall), Mr King (Wadham), Mr Owen (Brasenose), Mr Waite (Keble)

**Plymouth:** Miss Francis

**Reading:** Mrs Mesher

**Royal Academy of Music:** Mr. Thompson

**Royal Holloway:** Mrs. Turner

**Sussex:** Miss. Cox

**Warwick:** Dr Burnside

**Wimbledon School of Art:** Mr. Sherrington

## OVERSEA UNIVERSITIES:

Anyone interested in applying to any overseas universities **MUST** see Mrs Brown by the end of September 2012 at the very latest. The application system for these organisations is more complex, often involving individual applications for each university, so you must allow extra time for these.

# THE U.C.A.S. FORM

At first glance, the UCAS form and procedures look complex and bureaucratic. Actually, the process is fairly straightforward once you have chosen your universities and courses.

The only way you can apply to a UK university is through UCAS, so you need to ensure that you do it properly. It is therefore essential that you read the following carefully and that you ask advice accordingly. Speak with your tutors, head of year, older brothers and sisters, members of the Upper Sixth and your peers – there is much good advice out there; you must track it down.

See <http://www.ucas.com/guidedtour/english> for the official guide to completing the form.

90% of UCAS forms from Caterham will be sent by October half-term of the Upper Sixth so we need you to be organized, motivated and committed to keeping to deadlines. It is worth remembering that the sooner you submit the better.

## **Filling in the form:**

All Caterham UCAS applications are made through the **internet based UCAS 'Apply' System**. In September of the Upper Sixth, two members of each form will be instructed by Mr. Lesser on the electronic system and they will be charged with informing the remainder of their tutor group.

The following advice is worth noting:

### ***Your personal details:***

- Avoid nicknames!
- Avoid strange e-mail addresses!
- Don't forget your postcode!
- Be clear about your 'residential category'; this is important for the purposes of tuition fees

The rest is fairly self-explanatory.

### ***Your choice of courses:***

- You can apply to a maximum of 5 universities (fewer if you wish) or 4 for Medicine, Vet Science and Dentistry.
- It is vital that you include accurate details of course, campus and universities codes.
- For Art and Design routes, please see Mr. Lesser and Miss Church / Mrs. Kyle for further information.
- For Medicine, Physiotherapy, Dentistry and Veterinary Science please see Miss Henry for further information.

### ***Your education:***

- There is no need to include your primary or nursery schools!

### ***Your qualifications:***

- All your GCSE and AS results should be included.
- Any dance, drama, music or Young Enterprise qualifications should also be included.

- Do not include AS results that you have declined.
- All international qualifications should be included alongside details of English language tests that you have taken.

***Your employment history:***

- Stress any relevant work experience here as well as any 'worthwhile' jobs that you have undertaken.
- Think twice before including the likes of 'car washing', 'baby sitting', 'dog walking' etc!

***Your personal statement:***

- See next section.

***Your declaration:***

- Remember, that by signing the declaration you are saying that the information you have provided is accurate and complete and that you agree to abide by the rules of UCAS!

***Your reference:***

- Your tutor will write your reference with input from your teachers, Head of House and Head of Year. The Caterham Award is a vital source of information for your reference.
- It will include reference to your attitude, motivation, organization and suitability for the course. It will also include your predicted grade.
- Remember that the school will ALWAYS be as positive as possible in its references.

***Your submission:***

- Once you are 100% happy with your application, you must inform your Head of Year that you are ready to submit.

***Remember:*** to check, double check, proof read... and then ask someone else to do the same.

***Good luck!***

# THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

This section is crucial because it is the only part of the application where you have a chance to select and emphasise specific points about yourself. Clearly your academic potential and grades are the key factors BUT your wider experiences are also important.

## ***How do Admissions Tutors use the Personal Statement?***

- To help them select candidates
- To help them decide which candidates to interview
- To give interviewers options for questions
- To test whether the candidate understands the nature of the course
- To ascertain the level of interest that the candidate has in the course
- To help decide between borderline candidates

## ***What information should be included in the Personal Statement?***

- Reasons you wish to undertake the course – it may link to your career aspirations
- Your academic suitability for the course and reference to relevant academic assignments undertaken
- The reasons for your chosen AS Levels and how they may contribute towards preparing you for university study
- The level of interest you have in the course i.e. what wider reading have you done
- Your wider interests and extra curricular activities including: sports, drama, music, CCF, Young Enterprise, Duke of Edinburgh, Preview, Debating etc.
- Details of relevant work experience; particularly when the course is vocational
- Your personal qualities and skills i.e. teamwork, leadership, IT, communication
- Your positions of responsibility i.e. team captain, prefect, mentor etc
- Examples demonstrating your willingness to work hard and persevere with tasks.

**Universities are also very keen to see accurate, well-structured, well-planned statements displaying a good use of English.**

## ***What should you avoid on your Personal Statement?***

- Don't waffle
- Don't refer to your qualities and skills without giving examples
- Don't start every paragraph with 'I'
- Don't make mistakes – proof read carefully and re-draft several times
- Don't refer to work experience without explaining the insights gained from it
- Don't make out that you are superman
- Don't say that your main interests include 'going to the pub' and 'listening to rock music'!

## ***How should you structure your Personal Statement?***

It is important to divide your statement into coherent paragraphs and you should aim to fill much / most of the page. Outlined below is merely a broad guideline.

### **Paragraph 1:**

- State why you have chosen the course and your academic suitability to it.
- Explain (if appropriate) how it may link to your chosen career and you may include relevant work experience here
- Give examples of the specific topics you have enjoyed, the presentations you have made, the research that you have undertaken, the field trips you have embarked upon, the books you have read, the links to your chosen career

**E.g.** 'I have always been fascinated by the past, beginning with childhood interests in time-travel and mythology. At school, I have been particularly enthused by my history lessons and by the scope and variety of the subject matter taught. This interest has been developed with student exchanges to France and History field trips to Germany and Eastern Europe. Such opportunities have encouraged me to undertake a study in depth in 18<sup>th</sup> century French social history and I have also pursued some independent research into 20<sup>th</sup> century European dictators. Books like 'Hitler's Willing Executioners' by Daniel Goldhagen and the comparative study of 'Hitler and Stalin' by Alan Bullock have extended my knowledge and understanding of the subject as has my active membership of the History Society throughout my time in the Sixth Form. All in all, my commitment to History as well as my genuine skills in the subject has confirmed for me that I am suited to a degree course in History at university.'

### **Paragraph 2:**

- Outline your wider academic skills and reference to your other AS subjects (equally, you may include work experience here)
- Bring out your wider interests that have academic value and links

**E.g.** 'My interest in languages has been developed through my passion for travel. Trips abroad to places like Spain, France and India have also broadened my perspective on life and have exposed me to a breadth of different cultures and traditions. In addition, I enjoy visits to the theatre both to the West End and to smaller theatre companies either English or French speaking. I hope to extend these cultural interests during the year abroad of my languages degree.'

### **Paragraph 3:**

- Set out your areas of responsibility at school and in the wider community
- Include your wider interests and commitments e.g. library duty, social events organizer, voluntary work, junior sports coaching, supporting prep school pupils

**E.g.** 'Being nominated as a tutor group representative in the 6<sup>th</sup> form provided me with the opportunity to represent others in a responsible and fair manner. I had to extend my communication skills by speaking and listening in a large group. This experience should equip me to communicate effectively in an academic environment whilst at university. In addition, I have been involved in a number of drama productions as a technical assistant working well as part of a team and realizing the importance of meeting deadlines. Further responsibility has been gained as a member of the charity committee that helped run the school's non uniform days and raise funds for the poppy appeal and Christian Aid. I intend continuing with similar cultural and social activities during my time at university.'

**Paragraph 4:**

- Stress your particular skills: computer literacy, languages, communication, working to deadlines, problem solving, using initiative, working independently etc.

**E.g.** 'Work experience as a clerical assistant in a busy office enabled me to develop a number of important skills. Working in a small team ensured that I was able to listen carefully to others and work co-operatively with a variety of different people. In addition, I often had the opportunity to work independently which allowed me to use my own initiative. Such skills will no doubt prove useful during my Business Studies degree.'

**Paragraph 5:**

- Your concluding remarks and observations

**E.g.** 'The combination of my A Levels and extra curricular activities has made me a self motivated, determined and diverse individual. I now feel prepared to take on the challenges and take advantage of all that university life has to offer.'

Random reminders:

**Your Personal Statement should:**

- Show that you have skills suited to university life
- Show that you are someone who will benefit from university life
- Show that you are going to benefit from the course
- Show that you are an interesting personality

**Now:**

- Consult a teacher in the relevant subject to give advice
- Show your parents, friends, tutor, year head etc
- Then draft, re-draft and re-draft until you get it right!

# OPEN DAYS

The best way to judge whether or not you are suited to a university is to visit. The best time to visit is during an official Open Day. These are opportunities not only to visit the university facilities but also to explore your chosen department and meet current university staff and students.

As fewer universities interview candidates, Open Days (particularly department Open Days) are important events and enable prospective students to find answers to questions not included in the prospectus.

The sorts of questions you should ask are outlined below:

## The Open Day Check-List

### ***Subject specific:***

1. Are my examination subjects acceptable for entry to the course?
2. What grades are usually required?
3. Is the course modular or not?
4. Are candidates interviewed before being offered a place?
5. What is the average intake of students each year onto the course?
6. What is the staff / student ratio OR male / female ratio?
7. Will I be at a disadvantage if I apply for deferred entry?
8. Is a gap year encouraged?
9. How is the course taught?
10. Will there be opportunities of study trips or visits abroad?
11. How good are the IT facilities?
12. How good is the careers service?
13. What do current students think of the course?
14. What is the reputation of the department locally, nationally, internationally?

### ***General issues:***

1. What are the university facilities like?
2. Are all first year students guaranteed accommodation?
3. What is the accommodation like?
4. What student welfare services are available?
5. Can I keep a car safely?
6. How good are the catering facilities?
7. How good is security on campus / in the town?
8. What clubs and societies are available?
9. How active is the Student Union?
10. How easily do students find work once they have graduated?

**For information on Open Days either consult [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com)  
OR  
See the website of the relevant university.**

Bear the following advice in mind before committing yourself:

- In the summer term of the Lower Sixth you MUST attend ONE Open Day but you should not attend more than TWO.
- You do not need to go to Open Days of all 5 of your choices – that becomes expensive both financially and in terms of time.
- You may wish to be cautious early on and then choose to attend Open Days at the universities that have given you offers. It may prove rather futile attending Open Days only to find that the university in question has rejected you.
- Remember that Open Days continue throughout the Upper Sixth year and students in the past have often applied for Open Days once they are fully immersed in the UCAS process.
- Try to team up with others to attend Open Days.
- Try and share lifts / transport – and PLEASE think of the boarders before you take off.
- Increasing numbers of universities hold Open Days on Saturdays and in the holidays – these are good times to go.
- You can visit London Colleges in the afternoon and evenings – thereby avoiding missing a whole day of school.
- A good time to visit universities is during our half-terms – universities operate as normal during these weeks and so you get to see them in action even if an Open Day is not scheduled.
- Try and make contact with an OC before heading off on Open Day. See Mrs Brown for contact details.
- Don't go to an unrealistic Open Day – for example, if you are likely to gain BCC at A Level, there is no point in attending an Open Day at Bristol (even if all your friends are going!!!).
- Don't forget to sign exeat forms first.

***Make sure you see Mr. Lesser BEFORE you sign up for an Open Day. It is important to get advice before committing.***

***Oxbridge Open Days:***

Attendance at these Open Days is by pre-arrangement only. They are either College or Department days and can be booked via the relevant web-sites ([www.ox.ac.uk](http://www.ox.ac.uk) or [www.cam.ac.uk](http://www.cam.ac.uk)). Some colleges offer accommodation and all offer a free lunch and refreshments. Speak with Mr. Lesser and / or the head of department for information about these; they are VERY useful.

# INTERVIEWS

Once upon a time, all prospective university students were interviewed as part of the application process. Today, an interview is very rare. This is mainly because so many more students are going to university (the government target is 50% of all 18 year olds) and it is simply too expensive to interview them all.

Essentially, ALL Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary candidates WILL be interviewed along with some Lawyers, some Physiotherapists and most teachers. Drama and performing arts candidates will also ALL be required to interview / audition. The following section therefore is of main concern to these groups.

***If you are by chance invited for interview then consult this page and follow the advice given.***

## ***Before the interview:***

- Organize your transport so that you get there in good time; nothing worse than rushing or arriving late!
- Dress appropriately; you don't need to wear a suit but smart casual is OK and best to avoid the nose ring!
- Read the university prospectus and information about the department and course very carefully.
- Re-read your personal statement and UCAS form; many interview questions are based on this.
- Prepare answers for obvious questions e.g. why have you chosen this course, what has attracted you to this university etc.
- Be prepared to discuss specific interests you have, books you've read or places you've visited connected to your chosen course.
- If you are applying for a course that you have not studied before e.g. Psychology make sure that you have a decent grasp of the subject before the interview.

## ***During the interview:***

- On the day, try to look calm, cheerful and reasonably relaxed. A firm handshake, eye contact and a smile always go down well!
- Don't try and bluff in the interview; they will see through you in seconds. If you don't know an answer, say so.
- Be engaging and enthusiastic; they like candidates who show a genuine interest in their subject.
- The interview is unlikely to come in the form of a 'grilling'. Rather, interviewers aim to put the candidate at ease and want to discuss their thoughts and ideas.
- You will often be asked at the end of the interview whether or not you have any questions; have one or two ready to ask BUT do not ask questions on topics covered in the material already sent to you by the university.

## ***How will the school help?***

In the autumn term of your upper 6<sup>th</sup>, the school will offer interview advice / techniques / practice etc. It will come in 2 forms:

### **1. Heads of Department:**

If you have been called to interview for a degree in say Engineering you must inform the heads of Maths and Physics immediately. You must then arrange with them to give you a mock interview.

### **2. Parents Panel:**

Mrs. Brown will organize for a group of experienced parents to give each candidate a mock interview. The benefit of this is that you will be interviewed by a panel of people that you don't know.

## ***One final thing...***

### **Interview Howlers!**

*The following (allegedly) are actual comments made by interviewers about the people they have just interviewed!*

- "The applicant was stretched out on the floor of the office filling out the job application."
- "She wore a Walkman and said she could listen to me and the music at the same time."
- "A balding candidate abruptly excused himself. Returned to office a few minutes later, wearing a hairpiece."
- "Applicant announced she hadn't had lunch and proceeded to eat a hamburger and french fries in the interviewer's office - wiping the ketchup on her sleeve."
- "Stated that, if he were hired, he would demonstrate his loyalty by having the corporate logo tattooed on his forearm."
- "Interrupted to phone his therapist for advice on answering specific interview questions."
- "When I asked him about his hobbies, he stood up and started tap dancing around my office."
- "During the interview, an alarm clock went off from the candidate's briefcase. He took it out, shut it off, apologized and said he had to leave for another interview."

# OFFERS

All applications submitted by **15<sup>th</sup> January 2013** will be considered (*we strongly recommend that you submit well before that*).

UCAS will acknowledge your application and will ask you to check that it has interpreted your application correctly. Your acknowledgement will include your **application number** as well as your **password** to enable you to log in to the UCAS computer to follow the progress of your application (UCAS Tracking).

*Keep a careful note of your application number and quote it if and when you need to contact UCAS.*

## **Decisions:**

Decisions will then come from the universities in random order (they must decide before @ **27<sup>th</sup> April 2013**). They should start to arrive a few weeks after you apply and are transmitted to you via UCAS.

*If you have a long wait, it possibly means that you are a borderline candidate*

**BUT**

*Don't read too much into it. Some popular universities give late offers as do many medical schools.*

Before they make final decisions, they may invite you to interview or they may offer you a place and invite you to an Open Day.

You will receive one of three decisions:

- **U = unconditional offer**  
You are in! No further qualifications are required.
- **C = conditional offer**  
Still some work to do! If you accept the offer (say BBB or AAB) and you achieve the grades, then you are in.
- **R = rejection**  
Sorry – no place!

## **Replies:**

You have to reply to any offer you receive, **but not until you have ALL your decisions**. You will receive a **statement of decisions** from UCAS with an accompanying leaflet, which tells you what to do next. The statement will include a reply slip on which to inform UCAS which offer(s) you wish to accept.

## **The UCAS Points Tariff:**

Offers from universities will either come in terms of grades (BBB or AAB) **OR** in terms of points.

<b>GRADE:</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A2</b>
<b>A*</b>		140
<b>A</b>	60	120
<b>B</b>	50	100
<b>C</b>	40	80
<b>D</b>	30	60
<b>E</b>	20	40

**E.g.** you may get an offer of BBB or 300 points

You may, however, receive a more specific offer.

**E.g.** BCC, but the B must be in Geography

## **Accept or decline:**

Many students get 3, 4 or even 5 offers. You must reduce these down to 2. You may find yourself in the situation below where you have 4 offers:

**E.g.**

University 1: Conditional – BBC

University 2: Conditional - BBC

University 3: Conditional - CCC or 240 points

University 4: Rejection

University 5: Conditional - 280 points

You now need to make one **FIRM** and one **INSURANCE** offer and to decline the rest.

### **Firm Acceptance:**

If you firmly accept an offer this means that it is your first preference. You can accept only **ONCE**, you will not be able to change or cancel your reply.

### **Insurance Acceptance:**

You may also hold one additional offer as an insurance acceptance. Usually, your insurance offer will be lower than your firm offer i.e. university 4 in the example above.

### **Decline:**

If you decline an offer, you are indicating that you definitely do not wish to accept it. Be quite sure before you decide.

***Before you make your final decisions see your Head of Year to talk tactics.***

## ***What do universities look for when they give offers?***

- Intellectually able applicants
- Motivated applicants
- Competitive applicants
- Applicants who are likely to accept
- Applicants who are likely to make a valuable contribution
- Applicants who are likely to get the grades

## ***What will determine the nature of the offers?***

- If there is a high demand for a course, offers tend to be demanding
- If you apply to premier league universities, offers tend to be demanding
- If you apply for Medicine, Veterinary Science or Law, offers tend to be demanding.
- If you apply for Pharmacy, Psychology or Accountancy, offers are becoming increasingly demanding

## ***What if I don't get any offers?***

This is very rare, but alas it happens,

***You must inform Mr. Lesser immediately.***

- You can apply for '**UCAS Extra**', which means you can re-apply for other courses or universities and your deadline is the end of June. UCAS will publish listings of courses that will still consider applicants.
- You can '**go through clearing**'. This system operates as of mid August once results have been released. There is still a chance that you can get into your chosen course if places are still available.
- You can re-take some of your exams and re-apply the following year.
- You can apply for an alternative course.
- You may decide to take a Gap Year and re-apply.
- You may decide to go into employment and delay going to university.

***Remember – all is NOT lost if you get no offers. Much can be done in August to secure you a place at university if that is really what you want.***

# RESULTS DAY & BEYOND

Results will be issued on the **Thursday of the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August.**

It is advisable to come into school on that day. If you are a boarder OR if you are going to be away during results, make sure you have a way of contacting the school to help you with your final decision-making. Also ensure that you have given your contact details to Mrs. Stowell.

## ***Before results day you need to have thought of the following:***

- Will I definitely accept my offer?
- Am I, even at this late stage, thinking of a gap year?
- Do I have a 'Plan B' in case I don't achieve the required grades?
- Do I understand 'Clearing'?
- Will I do better than expected?
- Have I accumulated all the relevant information for my chosen university?

**Having one parent and a mobile phone on the day is very handy!**

## ***If your exams go well and you meet your offers:***

- You need to confirm your place.
- Before the end of August UCAS will send you an official notification of the result of your application. If your place is confirmed, you will be asked to reply to the institution within 7 days.
- You need to deal with your university registration, accommodation and induction procedures
- You need to sort out your finances and loans.

***Some universities will still offer you a place even if you have missed the conditional offer. The chances of this happening, however, varies greatly from course to course.***

## **If your grades are better than expected:**

If your results have met and exceeded the conditions of your conditional offer (CF) you might want to consider using Adjustment.

Runs from A Level results day 2013 until 31 August 2013 only.

### **To use Adjustment:**

- Register in Track by clicking on 'Register for Adjustment' on your 'choices' screen.
- Contact a university or college to find another place. The institution will check that you exceed the conditions of your unconditional firm choice.
- The institution will tell you if they can offer you a place, and you tell them if you want to accept it.
- If you are accepted through Adjustment, your Track screen will be updated with the new choice and we will send you a confirmation letter.

### ***If your grades are disappointing and fall short of your offers:***

In the event that you fail to qualify for your chosen university, you will need to take advice from either Mr. Lesser, Mr James, Mrs Brown, Mrs McVitty or Mr Fahey urgently. It is important that you make yourself available on both the Thursday and Friday of that week.

Then you will need to find out about vacancies through the clearing system.

***Vacancies will be published in various newspapers including the Independent and on the UCAS web-site. Official help-lines are also available.***

### **The facts about Clearing**

Clearing is a service that operates between mid-July and September. You can take part in Clearing if you have already applied through UCAS and you are in one of the following categories.

- You have not received any offers.
- You have declined all your offers or not responded by the due date.
- Your offers have not been confirmed because you have not met the conditions (e.g. you have not achieved the required grades).

### **Make sure that you're available to speak to universities and colleges**

Treat your Clearing application like a job application - deal with it yourself! Don't leave it to your parents or friends to sort out. During Clearing, you need to be available in person to deal with admissions tutors and to make decisions. It is important to plan your summer holidays so that you are at home when your exam results come out.

**If you are eligible for Clearing an 'Add Clearing choice' button will appear on your Track 'choices' screen which you can use to apply for a course.**

## WORK EXPERIENCE:

For certain courses, some sort of relevant work experience is increasingly regarded as essential. These include:

- Medicine and Dentistry
- Physiotherapy
- Veterinary Science and working with animals
- Architecture
- Education
- Law
- Speech Therapy

Students, however, of any courses are encouraged to embark on a period of work experience for it can often be a valuable addition to your Personal Statement.

University admissions tutors inform us that students should not only mention such experience on their UCAS forms but should also outline the insights that they have gained from such an experience.

### ***For example...***

A student last year applied to read Psychology at a prestigious university. She was unable to secure any directly relevant experience so instead decided to work in a primary school for a week in July. Whilst there she asked if she could observe and study the different learning habits of 7 year olds and gained some fascinating insights into the differences between boys and girls of that age. She highlighted some of these observations on her UCAS form and such revelations are genuinely well received.

If you want any help with securing work experience then think about / remember the following:

- See Mrs. Brown in the careers office
- See Mr. Lesser for advice and / or contacts.
- Use the network that your parents have to track down suitable experiences.
- Use your own initiative!

### ***Can I ask a favour...***

Please use Mrs. Brown as a final resort. There are a couple of main reasons for this. Firstly, she would prefer to give priority to boarders who clearly have less of a network in the U.K. Also, she would rather help you out once you've already made an effort to help yourselves. I hope that sounds fair!

***A final reminder / incentive: some work experience opportunities PAY!***

# GAP YEARS

As the world shrinks, as opportunities expand and as prices fall, the popularity of Gap Years increases. Before deciding whether you are going to embark on one, it is worth considering the pros and cons.

## Advantages:

- **Students** arrive at university a year older and a year wiser. They have also matured greatly (if they have used the time productively), have learnt to become independent and self-reliant. It is often easy to spot the Freshers who have taken a Gap Year, for not only do they look healthy, they are invariably more outgoing and confident.
- **Students** start their degree courses having had a break from the academic and examinations treadmill. They often appear fresher and ready for the academic challenges ahead.
- **Students** find that time between school and university is the best time to have a 'year out'. With tuition fees and other financial constraints facing today's students, many leave university with a serious burden of debt. A gap year, under such circumstances, is much less appealing.
- **Students** can and do, spend part of their gap year making and saving money for university. This is becoming increasingly important.
- **Students** can and do, gain much valuable work experience during gap years.

Real advantages can only be gained if you spend your gap year productively. Stacking shelves in Sainsbury's or pulling pints at the Harrow may actually prove rather counterproductive!

## Disadvantages:

- **Time** – is often cited as a concern regarding gap years particularly for students thinking of pursuing long degrees like Medics.
- **Continuity** – has been known to be a problem in certain subjects like Maths and Science whereby students simply forget much of what they learnt in the 6<sup>th</sup> form and have to spend much of their first year at university catching up.
- **Distraction** – is something that worries some parents. The fear is that by taking a gap year, a student will want to opt out of university all together (this only actually happens on very few occasions).

***You decide!***

## Choosing / planning your Gap Year:

There is an abundance of organizations ready and willing to sign you up and part you from your money. It is therefore well worth planning and researching your options carefully to ensure that you embark on the right adventure for you and get value for money on the way.

*It is worth asking yourself these key questions:*

- Do I want to travel abroad or stay in the UK?
- Do I want to spend part of the year in the UK and part of it abroad?
- Do I want to work as a volunteer or for a local wage?
- Do I want to embark on a real challenge / adventure?
- Do I want to be involved in conservation work?
- Do I want to spend time in the Third World?
- Do I want to teach?
- Do I want to learn a new language?
- Do I want to learn a new skill?
- How will I pay for it?
- Have I informed my university that I will be deferring for a year?
- Do I need to save some money for university?
- Will I plan the year out myself or go through a reputable organization?
- Have I contacted the foreign office about safety issues?
- Have I taken out full insurance?
- Have I consulted my doctor regarding medical issues?

**Remember:** a gap year is an opportunity to have an adventure and widen your horizons. Do not expect to change the world or crusade for world peace! You can do all that once you have graduated and learnt some real skills!

## **Useful contacts:**

There are many organizations that now cater for and organize Gap Years. Most relevant information and contacts are held in the careers library with Mrs. Brown.

It is worth, however, doing some preliminary research on the web. Start by doing a 'Google search' then the following sites are worth visiting:

- [www.bunac.org](http://www.bunac.org) - working adventures worldwide e.g. summer camps in the USA
- [www.changingworlds.co.uk](http://www.changingworlds.co.uk) - voluntary and paid placements worldwide
- [www.travellersworldwide.com](http://www.travellersworldwide.com) - teaching, conservation, languages, photography etc
- [www.bses.org.uk](http://www.bses.org.uk) - adventure, conservation, research
- [www.britishinstitutue.it](http://www.britishinstitutue.it) - learning Italian in Florence
- [www.frenchencounters.com](http://www.frenchencounters.com) - opportunities to live and work in France
- [www.pgl.co.uk/personnel](http://www.pgl.co.uk/personnel) - work as a sailing instructor
- [www.equity.co.uk](http://www.equity.co.uk) - work in a ski resort
- [www.gapwork.com](http://www.gapwork.com) - lots of interesting opportunities listed
- [www.teaching-abroad.co.uk](http://www.teaching-abroad.co.uk) - teaching and projects abroad
- [www.cesalanguages.com](http://www.cesalanguages.com) - language courses abroad
- [www.aventure.co.uk](http://www.aventure.co.uk) - travel, challenge, teaching, conservation
- [www.world-challenge.co.uk](http://www.world-challenge.co.uk) - global expeditions
- [www.questoverseas.com](http://www.questoverseas.com) - projects and expeditions in Africa and South America
- [www.coralcay.org](http://www.coralcay.org) - coral reef conservations projects
- [www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk) - social care placements throughout the UK
- [www.outwardbound-uk.org](http://www.outwardbound-uk.org) - Global expeditions and adventures
- [www.ConservationAfrica.net](http://www.ConservationAfrica.net) - conservation projects in Africa
- [www.basi.org.uk](http://www.basi.org.uk) - the British Association of Snowsport Instructors
- [www.madventurer.com](http://www.madventurer.com) - development projects and adventurous travel
- [www.gap.org.uk](http://www.gap.org.uk) - Gap activity projects worldwide
- [www.statravel.co.uk](http://www.statravel.co.uk) - specialists in gap year travel
  
- [www.inter-rail.co.uk](http://www.inter-rail.co.uk) - unlimited travel across 28 European countries from £125

***Enjoy the research.***

# OXBRIDGE

We actively encourage students who have a very strong academic record and who would like to apply to Oxford and Cambridge universities to 'apply' in writing to Mr Lesser indicating their academic strength, subject(s) for studying at university and why you should seriously be considered.

## **This letter is to be given to Mr Lesser by late February!**

It is important that we are clear at the very outset. For an application to be taken seriously the following profile needs to be met: -

- ❑ A very strong GCSE profile all A\*/A (with ideally a minimum 6 A\*)
- ❑ AS results at a minimum of AAAB (and an A2 profile of AAA+) with AS UMS average scores of 92% + (across all subjects and core subjects 94% +)
- ❑ A passionate commitment to the chosen subject. Additional and broad reading around the subject will be assumed and tested.
- ❑ A desire to attend and energetically participate/contribute to the subject enrichment programmes, which will commence in the summer term.

Please remember that the Oxbridge teaching process is distinct and different from other universities in the UK. The system is based on tutorials (often with just one or two students) with the academic tutors. Your contact time might be quite limited and the system relies heavily on your own self-discipline, commitment and tenacious willingness to read, analyse and discuss. There will be nowhere to hide and you must enjoy this very focussed and intense study. The terms might be relatively short but they are relentless and demanding. If you think that this level of intensity is daunting and frightening be careful.

If you believe that you have met the above criteria/expectations then write to Mr Lesser explaining why you would like to apply. Mr Lesser will then seek the subject teacher's views (and specifically Heads of Department) on your academic performance to date and your potential over the next year or two. If your teachers confirm your suitability and your academic performance in the summer justifies your expectations then the application will be encouraged for the October deadline. Mr Lesser will schedule an Interview with you hopefully before the end of the Spring Term.

**We will also invite you and your parents to an evening in at the school to discuss your possible application and the expectations/requirements for that application to be processed in the autumn. The date will be confirmed later in the school year.**

# OTHER TESTS

Over the last few years as the university application process has become so pressured and the desire for differentiating applicants has intensified and, as a result, new tests/processes have been developed. Please note below the additional tests that are either a) already part of the testing landscape or b) are in the development stage and will emerge over the next year or two:-

- LNAT (Law: some ten of the top UK Law Schools now require this))
- BMAT, UKCAT (Medicine: four universities require BMAT and virtually all the others require UKCAT)
- HAT (History: Oxford)
- EAT (English : Oxford)
- Physics Test
- PPE Test
- TSA (Thinking Skills Assessment: Cambridge a high proportion of Cambridge candidates)
- SAT (for US universities)

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and it is up to you to find out what extra tests may be required.

# FINANCE

For good or bad the system for funding has dramatically changed over the last decade. Every student now has to pay tuition fees and these have been significantly increased since the cohort starting university in September 2012.

If you are planning to go to university in September 2013 the system is as follows: -

- Following the Government's recent reforms regarding higher education and university fees, universities are able to charge up to £9,000 per year for tuition fees. There is a student loan available for this which will be paid directly to the university in the November of each academic year.
- Your living cost (i.e. of accommodation, food, entertainment, travel etc) will average about £6750 in addition to tuition costs (this figure will have to be increased by @ 25-30% if you are considering studying in London). Your parents can pay this direct or your Local Education Authority can assess you. The LEA will be obliged to assist your funding if the family income is below a certain figure. For most of Caterham students this opportunity will not be available. However a Student Loan is available to all Higher Education students. The Student Loan Company will make an assessment on the basis of your course and location (those not grant supported can borrow @ 75% of their living costs). A loan can be made available to you on a highly preferential rate of interest. However it is important that you recognise that this is a loan and will have to be repaid (both the capital and the accrued interest) once you are in employment and are earning above a certain figure. Repayments will be taken from your monthly salary and will be paid direct from your employer to the Student Loan Company. As an alternative you may choose to repay the whole sum once you graduate.

***It is a fact of life that as a student you may build up a loan and be carrying that debt throughout your student years.***

All student loans taken out will need to be repaid after graduation and once the student is earning over £21,000.

This means that a student entering university in 2013 may accrue a debt of at least £38,500 on tuition fees of £6,000 per year and £48,000 on tuition fees of £9,000 for a three year degree. Clearly if you were to follow a degree lasting four years or more you would have to increase these costs.

**Higher Education is an expensive business and needs to be treated seriously. However, please recognise that the earning profile of a university graduate is significantly higher than a non-graduate throughout his/her working life.**

Please note that in the March preceding your entry to university you will need to make contact with your own Local Education Authority to secure the relevant application forms and documentation. The completed UCAS form will 'trigger' the Student Loan documentation too.

Please note that overseas students (and this includes all non EU citizens who are considered non resident ie the family do not have a UK address nor paid UK taxes

**for a minimum of three years**) will have to pay higher fees (in excess of £10,000 per year dependent on the course).

So plan to finance your university years by taking the following steps at the identified time:

- **March** preceding your university start date contact your LEA and ask for and complete the Higher Education forms. Alternatively apply online at <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/index.htm>
- Make sure that the Student Loan Company has your application for assessment. Confirmation of the acceptance and level of the loan should be with you by **June** at the latest.
- **Discuss and agree** with your family the level of family support and the arrangements for that financial support eg bank account etc.
- **You will also have completed accommodation forms for the university in the spring before you start university.**

In terms of completing the UCAS form please note that you will have to enter a fee code that reflects the fact that either you have private finance (eg family) or in the case of UK students you need to specify your LEA (for most it will be Surrey or in some cases the London Borough of Croydon).

You can always go the Student Loans Company website to assess the position at [www.slc.co.uk](http://www.slc.co.uk). You can also contact your LEA, which is, of course, your local authority ie the authority that the family pay the Community Charge too.

# EXTRA INFORMATION

Below are a series of random extra thoughts and bits of advice.

## **Architects:**

Try reading the Culture section of the Sunday Times for it contains an article on architectural developments every week.

## **Medics:**

Keep up to date with medical developments e.g. cloning, NHS reforms, SARS etc. Also, you can subscribe, FREE, to the British Medical Journal on [www.bmj.com](http://www.bmj.com)

## **Journalists:**

Buy the Times on Fridays for the media section.

## **Teachers:**

Start reading the Times Educational Supplement on Fridays or the Tuesday Guardian for the latest developments in education.

## **Oxbridge candidates:**

Keep abreast of current affairs.

## **University Guides:**

Both the Times and the Guardian publish very useful university guides. If you can't get hold of the hard copy, then consult the web-site.

## **National Union of Students:**

The NUS web-site is full of information regarding student issues, news, advice, discounts and savings.

## **Cheap Travel:**

A Young Person's Rail Card or National Express Coach Card is a good investment especially if you are going to travel long distances to interviews and open days.

## **Mrs. Brown:**

Please visit the careers office as often as possible for you will pick up very useful information eg

## **Law students:**

- 1525 courses available within 330 institutions.
- Only 50% of law graduates move into the legal profession
- 50% of lawyers DON'T have a law degree.
- 15% of students who study law do not graduate.
- Combined Law degrees are hard work and most felt students needed to be exceptional to cope with the work needed.
- Law Schools are heavily over subscribed. Bristol received 3000 applications for 150 places last year with over half of these having 3 A predictions. The same was true of all other schools attending.