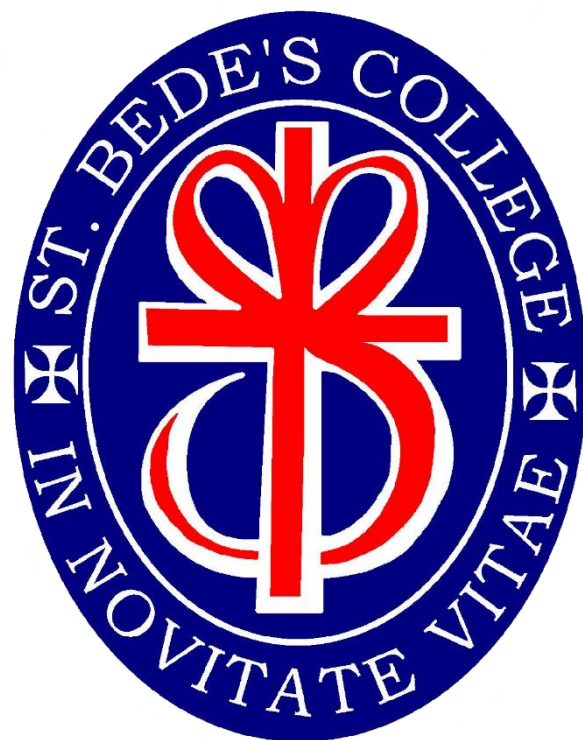


UCAS

Guide Parents and Students 2019/20



A Parents' and Carers' Companion to University Entrance

FOREWORD

The vast majority of the students who have graduated from our growing sixth form have gone on to study at university. Each child's reasons vary, but are usually some combination of:

- It is a natural development of their education
- A good degree is a necessity, passport or building block for a particular career
- They want to develop fully an enthusiasm for a subject or gain qualifications, or both
- They want to explore new areas such as geology, archaeology etc...
- A desire for the whole university experience, to broaden their outlook and skills
- They want to buy time before deciding what they want to do as a career. They study a subject because it interests them. Most job applications do not require a degree in a specific subject.

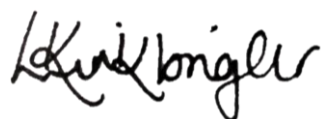
It is, however, usual for some students to take the decision that studying at university is not the path they wish to follow. We encourage all our students to consider the wide range of options available to them, especially if they are not certain university is for them.

For the purposes of this booklet however, we are presuming a university application.

For parents and carers who have gone through this process before there will be little that surprises them. The aim is to set out the key pieces of information clearly – if you have questions though, please do feel that you can contact the sixth form team.

It is the candidate's application and ultimately they decide what goes into the form, but that is within a supportive framework offered by the sixth form team of tutors, subject teachers and UCAS Advisors.

We hope that you find all the information enclosed helpful!



Lucy Kirkbright
Director of Sixth Form
Assistant Principal



Rowena Hector
Deputy Director of Sixth Form

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The Sixth Form Team

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Miss L Kirkbright | Director of Sixth Form and Assistant Principal |
| Miss R Hector | Deputy Director of Sixth Form |
| Mrs L Barton | Sixth Form Administrator |
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If you have queries regarding the UCAS process, please contact your child's tutor.

University and Colleges Admissions Services

- All applications to UK universities must be made through UCAS
- UCAS is an efficient data handling service, but has no part in the decision making process
- It is now essentially an on-line service
- www.ucas.com is the invaluable website, through which all applications are made. There is a useful section for parents / carers and the course search with all the course details. It is open to everyone with no password required
- Candidates can apply for up to 5 places (4 for medics, vets and dentists)
- Universities are not entered in rank order; nor can the institutions see where else a candidate has applied
- Candidates may apply to more than one course at a specific university, or for a range of subjects at different institutions. Most apply for similar courses at 5 different universities. Only one personal statement may be submitted, so it must suit all applications
- Applying to UCAS does not prevent a candidate from applying to universities abroad, including America, for post- A-level employment, drama school or music conservatoires etc. (Conservatoire applications go through www.cukas.ac.uk)
- Applications are submitted between September 1st and January 15th of year 13, but St Bede's Catholic College, like many other schools has much earlier deadlines
- No candidate should apply to a university where they would not go if offered a place.



Unifrog is the complete destinations platform – a one-stop-shop for students in KS5 regardless of their interests or academic ability. It is the only place where students can compare every university course, apprenticeship and FE course in the UK as well as university in 30 other countries across the world. This is alongside getting access to labour market information and advice on careers and subjects for all routes.

All students in Areté receive a Unifrog login during year 12. In addition to researching courses and institutions, they will be able to record and evidence their key activities and competencies as well as prepare their personal statement. The sixth form tutors are able to track the progress of all their tutees and offer support with personal statement writing via Unifrog.

There will be additional information about Unifrog sent to parents and carers separately which will also include parental login details should you wish to explore the platform yourselves.

<https://www.unifrog.org/student>

The Application Process

- All members of year 12 receive a series of pastoral lessons as part of their timetable when advice and guidance regarding UCAS is shared
- It is important that in year 12 students start thinking about their options early – by Easter they should have visited (or at least planned to visit!) some university open days, a number of which take place on Saturdays
- During the summer term of year 12, students register on the UCAS website and fill in the factual elements during one of their tutorial periods
- Students work on their Personal Statement over the summer holidays. They will have discussed this with their tutors and teachers before the end of term and will have been given guidance
- The completed form is submitted as early as possible in the first term of year 13
- Offers are made typically until the end of March. For some students there is a very long period of silence from popular universities. Others make offers quite quickly, as early as October half-term.

Choosing Courses

Our students are given a great deal of guidance by their tutors, teachers and the sixth form team, but ultimately the choices to be made are theirs. The list below contains the main factors to be considered – priorities will vary from student to student.

- The content of the course
- Quality of the degree
- If applying for a vocational degree, e.g., Business Studies is there a “sandwich” year, i.e. an option of a year working out in business during the course?
- Entry requirements
- Location
- Quality of facilities
- Methods of assessment
- Style and size of the university
- Will it help you get a job?
- Does it provide what the student wants?
- What is the annual tuition fee?
- London?
- America?

It is important that a great deal of thought goes into what course a student wishes to study, and where. Students who do not appreciate the importance of this decision can sometimes find themselves disenfranchised with university during the first year, and ultimately not complete the course.

Offers

Candidates get to know their offers via TRACK on the UCAS website.

- TRACK is the on-line communication element of the UCAS website which is accessed from the front page of the website
- When the UCAS form has been processed, each candidate is given a personal pin number and log-in
- All decisions are given to UCAS via TRACK, which then communicates to the universities and the students

Offers are made either by grades or in points

Grade Offers set specific targets in the applicant's chosen A level subjects.

- Sometimes specific grades in particular subjects are required
- This scheme is used, in general terms, by the more traditional academic universities.

Points Offers demand a specific total of points based on the tariff chart.

- They will principally comprise of A level results
- Where a candidate took 4 AS subjects in year 12 but 3 A-levels in year 13, the points from the dropped AS subject can be included
- Points can also be gained from other sources, for example Music exams grade 6 and above or Sports Leadership qualifications. See UCAS website for details
- These offers are favoured by the "new" universities

| A-Level | AS LEVEL | UCAS Points |
|---------|----------|-------------|
| A* | | 56 |
| A | | 48 |
| B | | 40 |
| C | | 32 |
| D | | 24 |
| | A | 20 |
| E | B | 16 |
| | C | 12 |
| | D | 10 |
| | E | 6 |

- It is particularly worth noting, the EPQ carries points equivalent to half an A-level, and Maths Studies carries point equivalent to an AS.

Unconditional Offers

- If you are applying after you have taken A-levels, you will be hoping your grades will be good enough to secure you a place. If that is the case, you are given an unconditional offer
- Increasingly, some universities may make you an unconditional offer if they are keen to secure you – try not to let this cloud your judgement about where you really want to study!

Termly Time Line in the University Application Process

Year 12 Spring Term

- UCAS Parents Evening
- Assembly held to introduce students to the UCAS application process
- Students given time in tutorial periods to research potential university and course choices
- Tutors to discuss potential options with tutees
- Students write a “mock” personal statement, including everything they hope to be able to say by the beginning of Year 13. E.g. I completed work experience in a hospital...
- Students attend UCAS Higher Education Convention
- Students plan to attend Open Days.

Year 12 Summer Term

- Students register on UCAS Apply and complete their personal and education details including GCSE results and AS Levels
- Students begin drafting personal statements, to be fully drafted over the summer holidays.

Year 13 Autumn Term

- Final predicted grades submitted by all teaching staff
- Students complete personal statements
- Registration for University Admissions Tests – these are additional assessments required by some institutions before application. Typically, Medicine, Veterinary Science and Law, but increasingly, others too
- Tutors complete references and upload onto UCAS
- Early applicants (medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, Oxbridge) submit applications by **1st October (internal)**
- External Deadline for early applicants (**15th October**)
- Applications completed by **October half term** for all other students
- Remaining (i.e. exceptional circumstances) UCAS applications completed by 1st December.

Year 13 Spring Term

- External Deadline for applications (**15th January**)
- UCAS Extra* is available from late February
- Applications for student finance can be made from March.

LOTS OF REVISION TAKES PLACE!

*UCAS Extra is a free service that allows applicants to keep applying for higher education courses even if the original five choices have been used up. For more information visit the UCAS website and select 'extra choices'.

Year 13 Summer Term

Applicants who have received all their replies make their decisions by the end of April. By this stage the applicants know exactly how many marks are needed for which grade in all subjects.

Students choose two offers. They are:

- (CF) Conditional Firm - if the grades are met the applicant has a place. This should be the place that the student really wants to attend, but the grades must be possible
- (CI) Conditional Insurance –this should have lower grades than the CF offer, hence its name. Applicants really need to be sure that the grades are achievable or they may not get their desired course. If a candidate is not accepted by their first choice but meets the terms of the CI offer, then that place is guaranteed.

Sometimes a candidate's favourite choice is the lowest of their offers, so in that case the CI will be higher and so of little value.

The CI may be the safe option or a realistic one if CF is being ambitious and optimistic. No candidate should have applied to a university where they would not go and there is no point in holding an offer if they would not accept it.

Results Day

Normally the middle Thursday in August.

Candidates can receive their results by collecting them at college.

Candidates can look at the university decision in **Track** – though this is sometimes slow and unreliable first thing! The universities have seen the results the day before, so decisions have been made.

Clearing takes place for those who have failed to gain their places. The process brings together unsuccessful candidates and the places that are available.

Adjustment is a scheme where candidates who exceed expectations in their results can seek places in better universities. They can hold their firm choice whilst talking to other universities about potential offers. Anecdotally, there are very few places available.

Staff are on hand on results day to help sort out problems. After that, the sixth form team can be contacted by email.

Applicants reject places at various stages in September or just don't turn up at the start of term, so it is still worth keeping in contact with universities you like.

St Bede's Catholic College support for past students

Students who leave St Bede's in July can still get support from the sixth form team if they wish to re-apply to university for whatever reason. Each year some students will do so, mainly because they have decided to study another subject, are re-applying to a competitive subject or did significantly better / worse than anticipated in the A-levels.

Student Finance

There are five aspects to student finance:

1. Tuition fees

These are capped at £9250 per year. Each university is free to set their own fees, and most universities are now charging the full £9250. This value will rise with inflation each year (was £9000 for 2015/16), and universities can apply the increase to current students too, so second and third year fees could be more. Only universities who are judged to have good teaching will be allowed to increase their fees.

2. Loans

Loans are available to cover or help with:

- tuition fees
- maintenance (living costs).

All students will be eligible for a **tuition fee** loan for the full amount of their tuition fees and this goes directly to the university.

The maximum **Maintenance Loan** for new students starting from 1 September 2019 is:

- £8,700 if you live away from home and study at a university or college outside London
- £11,354 if you live away from home and study at a university or college in London
- £7,324 if you live at home with parents or carers
- £9,963 if you spend a year of a UK course studying overseas

You can apply for a partial Maintenance Loan which doesn't depend on your household income information. This means you can apply without your parents or partner having to send in any details of their income. This entitles you to approximately 45%-50% of the values above, and varies slightly depending on each of the categories.

If you want to get the full Maintenance Loan, Student Finance England will assess your household income and base the amount of your loan on that. Your household income is your parents' or partner's income. Any wages earned by the student in holidays or part-time evening and weekend work is not included. Amounts available to final year students are less than shown here, as they do not need to cover any summer holidays.

Visit <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance-calculator> to get a personalised estimate.

3. Grants

Grants were scrapped for students starting new courses from September 2016 onwards. The Maintenance Loan has been increased and overall, students particularly from poorer backgrounds, now have access to more money – but all of it will be in the form of a loan.

4. Repayment of Student Loans

Loans are provided by the Student Loan Company.

Students will not have to start making repayment until **April after they leave their course**. Loans will not have to be repaid until their income goes above the current threshold of £480 a week, £2,083 a month or £25,000 a year. This threshold will next be reviewed in 2021.

The amount you pay back each month, does not depend on the amount you borrow, but the amount you earn. You pay 9% of everything you earn over £25,000.

The example below shows what you might repay each month depending on your income.



If you don't earn, or stop earning more than £25,000pa, you stop paying. Your loan is written off after 30 years, or when you have paid back all of your loan (plus interest), whichever comes first.

Information about how much you are likely to repay is available on:

<http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-tuition-fees-changes>

5. Bursaries

All universities provide bursaries ranging from a few hundred to several thousand pounds. Bursaries are based on parental income, academic ability and subject shortage. So a very bright student from a poor family who wants to read, say, Chemistry or French is likely to be eligible for a good bursary. All universities have their own system of bursaries, but the idea is to subsidise students from low income backgrounds and attract the best students to shortage subjects.

Lists of bursaries are in prospectuses and for each course in UCAS Course Search. They are typically applied for once an offer has been made.

6. Scholarships

Many universities offer scholarships. These are financial awards given to students who show particular academic or sporting prowess. Details of each universities scholarships are available on their individual websites. **Many of these need to be applied for at the point of application – not once an offer is received so it is important to research in to these early.**

7. The cost of being a student

This varies from university to university and student to student. University accommodation in the first year is likely to cost between £4000 and £7000, depending on location and facilities. This may or may not include catering. Increasingly university accommodation is self-catered. Learning to cook on a budget is a good skill.

On top of that will be books, transport, clothes, educational equipment, materials and entertainment. It is unlikely that a typical student will be able to survive on less than £6000 a year. Indeed, the National Union of Students suggest on average students spend £12000 a year above their tuition fees.

This means that parental support is necessary unless the student supplements their income by working during term time or in the holidays. Whilst working in the holidays has always been common, working in term time is increasingly common, and most universities have an office to help students find suitable part-time work.

Whilst the debt that students leave university with should be a consideration, it is how the student will finance themselves during the degree that probably needs the most thought.

Many universities now give a breakdown of typical costs of living for a student studying with them on their websites – these pages can be an excellent starting point when considering how university will be funded.

What do graduates earn?

The employment rate of the working age population is 87.1% for graduates and 69.8% for non-graduates (Source: Graduate Labour Market Statistics: 2015, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016).

The new Graduate Labour Market Statistics also show that, in 2017, English-domiciled graduates and postgraduates had higher employment rates than non-graduates and the average, working age graduate earned £10,000 per year more than the average non-graduate.

To see the Graduate Labour Market Statistics 2017 in full, please visit the Department for Education website

Gap Years

There are various reasons why students decide to take a gap year. They range from:

- wanting more time to make a firm decision upon which University to attend or which course to take
- wanting to reapply to a particular University or course
- broadening their horizons
- Taking a break from a treadmill of exams

To:

- training to be a snowboarding instructor or cook/chef
- working in a foreign school or doing charity work
- gaining work experience to enhance career opportunities
- making money to prepare for university.

Gap years always work better, or at least the time spent on them is more effective, when they are structured. They can be the experience of a lifetime, but require thought as to how the experience can best serve future career plans and make a positive contribution to your professional skills and personal qualities.

There are many benefits that can be gained from taking a gap year; these include improving language skills, experiencing other cultures and of course improving employment potential. However, for a gap year to be a success, it needs to be properly prepared, budgeted and managed.

There are many companies that specialise in organising gap years to a multitude of places in the world. Many have educational themes, sporting themes where you can train to be an instructor in your chosen field or undertake environmental projects. They often have informative websites but there is nothing like talking to someone who has taken a year out before university. Gap year fairs also happen on a regular basis and this is a chance to meet the companies, and often people who have undertaken a gap years with them. A company in which you are interested should always be able to give you e-mail addresses of students who used them the previous year.

University Application:

There are a high number of people taking gap years. Each year roughly 5% of applicants defer entry via UCAS. Students choosing to take a gap year would be wise to consider submitting an

application for deferred entry. The alternative is to submit an application the following year, with A-level grades in hand, which can be beneficial for those students who aspire to beat their predicted grades.

Once an application is deferred, the student is not bound to enrol the following year, and could withdraw and reapply through UCAS if there has been a change of heart. Similarly, once accepting offers, students could defer at a late stage, and although this is at the discretion of the university, they are usually accommodating to these requests.

Not all universities or courses will accept deferred applications, so it is necessary to check this on their website before submitting a deferred application.

Useful websites

Choosing Courses

www.Ucas.com

The key site through which applications are made. There is an excellent course search feature to help with initial searches for courses. There is a parents section, blogs, videos etc.

www.unistats.co.uk

Statistical analysis of current students' attitudes to all aspects of their courses, from facilities to quality of marking and feedback

www.prospects.co.uk

A huge site aimed really at undergraduates. It provides information on how to gain entry to specific careers and courses, and what can be done with what degrees.

Individual University websites are also very useful when researching potential course choices.

There is an excellent book on all aspects of Higher Education application called **Getting In and Getting On** published by **UCAS**.

Student Finance

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/finance-and-support>

The UCAS website is a good starting point for information about student finance.

<http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/>

Martin Lewis' website has a wealth of information about the current student loans system and what it means for you in practice.

<https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk>

Student Finance England's own website with information for parents – several useful videos and leaflets available.

<https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>

Gov.uk is the portal for applying for Student Finance but also has calculators that can estimate the amount of support you are likely to receive.