



Arden Sixth Form



**UCAS Student Guide
How to apply to University**

Name

Tutor

Password

User Name

UCAS Personal ID Number

Your UCAS Application number arrives when the final UCAS form is sent by the school. Make a note of it. You will need it to use "Track" – a system for tracking the offers that universities send you.

Timeline

Register as an applicant on UCAS (www.ucas.com)



Choose your course



Complete the online application



Write your personal statement



Submit your completed UCAS form



Replying to offers



Getting your results

UCAS Key dates

Mid-June 2016	Applicants can register and start to complete their application.
Mid-September	Schools can start to submit completed applications to UCAS.
15 October	Most medicine, dentistry, veterinary sci/med and Oxford <u>or</u> Cambridge.
15 January 2017	Application deadline for most courses.
24 March 2017	Many art & design courses (check each course for deadline).
30 June 2017	Applications after this date held for Clearing.
17 August 2017	Results

Arden Key dates

June-July 2016	Register with UCAS and a first draft of their Personal Statement
September 2016	All sections (apart from the personal statement) completed.
15 th October 2016	All early entrants submitted.
23 rd October 2016	All sections completed, fee paid and submitted to Arden.
15 th January 2017	All references, predicted grades and meeting with student completed and submitted to UCAS.
February 2017	Parents evening about replying to offers.
24 th March 2017	Art & design courses with a March deadline submitted.

Step 1: Register on UCAS

Enter web address www.ucas.com

1. Click on **Apply and Track** ➔ **Start an undergraduate application** ➔ **Register and apply for 2017 entry** ➔ **Register**
2. Read and follow the instructions on the next few screens and fill in the relevant information.
3. Make a note of your username in the front of this booklet and keep your password safe. You will be asked to devise four personal security questions. (For example – What is your favourite sport?)
4. On the next screen choose to **apply through My school/college**.
5. Enter the Buzzword for 2016 entry as **Ardenentry2017**.
6. Enter your tutor group
7. Make a note of your Personal ID number in the front of this booklet. You will need to quote this number if you telephone UCAS.
8. Watch the video to help guide you through the application process.

Verifying your email address – Your email address needs to be verified before you can send your application to UCAS. When you enter your email address, UCAS will send you an email with your verification code and instructions on what to do next. **UCAS will then send you emails alerting you to changes to your application including decisions made by your chosen universities.**

Applying for only one course or for courses at only one university is a risky strategy and should be discussed with the Sixth Form Team first.

Step 2: Choosing courses

You can apply for up to five courses through UCAS and there is no preference order.

The tools and advice given on the UCAS website link below are a great place to start when deciding on what course to study at university. The [UCAS Course Search](#) is comprehensive online database of 37,000 courses available at more than 370 institutions.

<http://searchucas.com/>

If you are completely stuck as to where to start, the internet offers a wealth of advice. Below are a few links to help you make the decision:

<http://universitywhich.co.uk/advice/help-i-dont-know-what-course-to-choose-what-do-i-do>

<http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/courses/choosing-a-course/>

<http://www.bestcourse4me.com/>

Research

Research is the most important part of the journey. Give yourself plenty of time to properly research a variety of courses and the modules that each one offers. Discuss your potential predicted grades with your subject teachers first to give yourself a realistic idea of what you can apply for. Once you have an idea of the sort of grades you may get, you can effectively research the courses available to you. Don't just stick with a couple that you like, consider other courses with lower offers that will maximise your chances of receiving as many offers as possible. Use your five choices wisely and ask for advice from the Sixth Form Team and your friends and family to ensure that you have made informed decisions.

Nearly all courses on UCAS have an Entry Profile detailing what the institution is looking for in terms of their applicants. You need to be fully prepared before you start your application in order to identify skill gaps in a timely fashion. Every year some applicants are unsuccessful for reasons that could have been avoided if they had undertaken better research.

It is important to visit the universities to see if you like them before you apply. You will need to consider transportation links, facilities and if it feels 'right' for you. Most universities have open days when you can visit and look around. These are advertised on their websites but you can check when all the university open days are here: www.opendays.com. The best time to attend open days is before you submit your application. Think about the number you are going to

attend. Do not go to too many as you will struggle to remember each university or college and their individual features and benefits will all roll into one.

When deciding on a university course you may want to consider:

- The job you would like to do after graduating
- The qualifications you will need from college to gain entry to various courses and universities
- Range of modules and flexibility of module choice
- Number of students who go on to relevant employment
- What each of the universities has to offer in terms of facilities, clubs and which university 'feels' right for you.

Additional Help and Advice

You can make an appointment with our **Careers Advisor Stephen Brady** to discuss future career options. Appointments can be made in the KS4 office.

Step 3: Completing the online application

Return to www.ucas.com and log in to complete your application. Details on how to complete each section can be found at

www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/apply-and-track/filling-your-application

Important points

The following sections can be completed straight away and updated at a later date if necessary:

- **Personal details**
- **Education**
- **Employment**

1. Personal details

Please ensure that you take the time to complete all relevant sections and that the details are all correct. Your email address will be used by UCAS and universities to contact you with important information. Please make sure you supply an address that you will check regularly. Also **ensure that your email address is an appropriate one that will not cause any offence to potential admissions officers.**

2. Education

This is the section where most mistakes are made so carefully read the instructions and watch the video provided in the section for further guidance.

You must list all qualifications, even if they are ungraded and especially units and modules that you are currently taking. For those qualifications that you are currently taking, list the grade as pending.

If you have taken any BTEC qualifications, you must provide the BTEC reference number which can be found on your certificate. If you cannot find this on your certificate then please bring the certificate into school and we can help you find it. If you have lost your certificate, you will need to contact either the examination officer from the school where you took the qualification or the teacher who taught you the subject.

3. Employment

You can provide up to five names and address of current or previous employers. If you have not completed any paid jobs, please mark this section as complete.

Step 4: Writing your Personal Statement

The three main things that will help you obtain offers at your chosen universities are

1. Your potential grade profile
2. The comments in your reference
3. Your personal statement

Your personal statement is a very important element of your application and can make the difference between gaining a place at university or not.

Admissions tutors read thousands of personal statements to choose the strongest candidates for their course. They are looking for candidates who are highly motivated with a clear passion for the subject and who also have the academic ability and personal attributes to succeed.

Ensure that you check the requirements for each University that you have chosen and that you contact the departments directly to ask what they are looking for in applications if you are unsure.

Many universities do not interview potential students and this is your way of convincing the admissions tutors that they should offer you a place on your chosen course. If the university does interview you, they may ask you questions based on your personal statement, so make sure you do not over exaggerate.

Main points to include

1. Explain your reasons for wanting to study the course
2. Explain how you're right for the course
3. Your knowledge and enthusiasm for the course detailing what particular areas of the subject you are interested in and any extra reading/activities you have carried out extra to the syllabus.
3. Say what you've done outside the classroom for example work experience and why it's relevant to your course
4. ...And relevant to your chosen career if known
5. Can you demonstrate transferable skills? If so make sure you expand on the most relevant ones and give good examples not just listing the skills you have.
6. Show that you're a critical thinker
7. What's the long term plan or where could studying the course lead
8. How can you contribute to your course and the university – what makes you stand out?
9. Do you have any extracurricular activities to mention that show you're an interesting person with other skills to offer?
10. Keep it positive

You have space in APPLY for up to 4000 characters (including spaces) or 47 lines.

You will need to think about your personal statement in two sections.

- 1) Academic
- 2) Personal

Aim for **between a half to three quarters** of your statement to be on the academic section detailing why you want to study the subject and what skills you possess to do this effectively.

Reasons for Your Choice of Course – Have you:

- Shown evidence of research into course (s) you are applying for?
- Demonstrated your interest in the course?
- Commented on your enjoyment of relevant subjects?
- Researched career aspirations?

Relevant Employment, Work Experience/ Placements – Have you:

- Included skills and experience from life, as well as college, related to your course choice?
- Included relevant career aspirations?
- Shown evidence of your motivation and ability to succeed as a student – do you have good time management, determination, self-motivation, and ability to juggle priorities, ability to be an independent learner at university?
- Demonstrated what you have learned through relevant part-time jobs, past jobs, family life, sports activities, and voluntary work?
- Provided evidence that others have given you responsibility or have selected you for a position, eg class representative, supervisor, secretary to your tennis club.

Although universities will be interested in what activities you do outside of college, you should always relate them to how they will make you a better student.

If Your Degree Choice is Vocational- Have you:

- Spoken to professionals to find out the most challenging parts of the job, what skills and attributes you need to overcome these, and demonstrated you have these?
- Tried to get work experience or voluntary work relevant to your degree/career choice and evidenced what you have learned?
- Demonstrated that you have the skills, personal attributes to do well in this vocation?
- Researched the vocation online, by speaking to someone who works in the profession or your College Lecturer: are there certain initiatives, policies or buzz words that you should be familiar with?

Remember for vocational courses, universities are still looking for academic ability

Top Tips for your personal statement

- **Start with an interesting opening sentence.** Try to avoid, 'I'm really passionate about History and would love to study it at University'. Anyone can say this.
- **Spend time doing your statement!** Don't do it in a hurry, it needs to stand out and takes time to create. You should draft and re-draft – it is not unusual to do about 10 drafts.
- **First impressions count!** Make sure you have perfect spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- **Seek advice!** – from the universities you are applying to and show your personal statement to friends and family, Careers and Student Support staff at the College. Use your contacts to gain further advice on specific courses.
- **Use your own words!** Use language that is natural to you, and make sure it is your own words. If you try and use too flowery language to impress or complicated words in the wrong context it can have the opposite effect.
- **Demonstrate it!** Don't just say you are interested in something, relate it to your course and demonstrate it with evidence. **Your statement is individual to you and should demonstrate your suitability for your chosen course/s.**
- **Make every sentence count** – Admissions tutors are looking for well-rounded individuals who will make the most of university life both socially and academically. Make sure your personal statement demonstrates this.

Avoid the following:

- **Plagiarism** – You will be caught! UCAS has very sophisticated software for detecting copies and plagiarism. Such matters will be dealt with severely.
- Defining the subject
- Making things up – be honest. It is very clear when a personal statement has been made up.
- Inappropriate language, quirkiness and jokes. This is a FORMAL application; stand out for the right reasons.
- Listing all your skills and qualifications.

Writing style tips for your personal statement

Short sentences are always more likely to be correct than long sentences BUT use some of the following structures and you will have longer sentences which act to persuade. **The punctuation is NOT optional.**

Use a colon when explaining ideas; it makes you sound confident.

My passion for chemistry ensures that I attempt to stay up to date: I listen regularly to podcasts on the latest developments and subscribe to Chemistry Today. *(note that the bits of the sentence of either side of the colon would also make sense if in two separate sentences).*

Use fronted phrases to get the obvious out of the way quickly so you can focus on your skills instead.

Because of my volunteer work with Oxfam, I have developed interpersonal skills and have found myself easily able to talk to a wide range of people.

After studying it for GCSE, I realised that Geography was the area I wished to study more.

After a great deal of preparation, I was able to organise an entire youth event.

Use semi-colons to list elements where it's a list of phrases, not single words.

As a result of my cricket coaching, **I have found that I can work under pressure; inspire a team; successfully manage school work and develop my teaching skills.**

Use a pair of commas to embed extra information.

I am keen to study English, **particularly the sociolinguistics unit,** as I believe that language and society are closely interlinked.

A few other things...

- Check homophones (there/ their/ they're etc.).
- Ensure that 'as well'; 'a lot' and 'in front' are presented as two words.
- Check for any sentences that don't make sense: a lot of people start with a long fronted phrase but don't actually finish the sentence.
- Read it to check that it makes sense.

If your tutor is having to proof read because your statement is full of errors, they won't have time to help you get the content up to scratch!

Step 5: Submit your application online

Once you have completed all the sections of your application, you will need to pay the UCAS fee and submit your application to Arden by 23rd October 2015. Your application will not go to UCAS if you have applied through Arden.

At this point we will start the process of writing your reference and checking your details are correct in your application. All form tutors have 10 working days to write your reference from the time it has been submitted.

A member of the sixth form team will then meet with you to go through your choices, predicted grades and reference. Once it has all been reviewed and checked, we can then submit your application to UCAS.

Key Points to note:

- We base the predicted grades on the AS results and they will usually be one grade higher than what you achieved.
- In some circumstances, if you are just within a grade, the predicted grade may remain at the same level as your AS results.
- If there are exceptional circumstances and your subject teacher is in agreement, we may go two grades higher. This is a rare occasion and you should normally base your choices on achieving one grade higher than your AS results.
- If you leave your application to the last minute, please be aware that your application will also be dealt with last as we process them on a first come first served basis.
- Although Universities have to give equal consideration to all applications received before the January 15th deadline, please be aware that some Universities start offering places as soon as they receive applications. Getting in early could therefore be an advantage.

Step 6: Replying to offers

You will receive a letter from UCAS with details of how to follow the progress of your application on TRACK. Please remember that you must reply to your offers by the deadline given to you by UCAS. If you do not do this – UCAS will reject your offers on your behalf.

Your reply deadline will be displayed in 'Track'. The reply date is **your individual reply date** and it is usually the **beginning of May**. It may be a different date though so please check!

You need your application Password and your Personal ID Number to access TRACK. Keep this information safe.

You can use TRACK to:

- Follow the progress of your application
- Change your postal address, email address and/or telephone number
- Apply for other courses in UCAS EXTRA
- Reply to your offers
- Withdraw your application

Your dates for replying to your offers may be different from your friends. Please check and reply by the right date or your offers will be declined by UCAS on your behalf.

UCAS will reply to each of your choices with one of the following offers:

Unconditional Offer This means you have already met the criteria to allow you to study this course.

Conditional Offer This means that the university has set certain conditions that you have to meet before you can start, eg obtaining certain grades in your graded unit, portfolio requirements, passing an interview. The condition(s) will be made clear to you.

Unsuccessful This means that your application was unsuccessful and you are not offered a place. This may be because you are not studying the subjects required for entry. The reason will either be made clear by UCAS at this stage or sometimes it notes that the university will be in touch with you directly to explain.

You will then have to reply to the university's offers with one of the following responses:

Firm Acceptance

The firm acceptance is your first choice, it is your preferred choice out of all of the other offers you have received. If you accept an unconditional offer, you are agreeing that you will attend the course at that university or college and must decline all other offers. If you accept a conditional offer, you are agreeing that you will attend the course at that university or college if you meet the conditions of the offer. You can accept another offer as an insurance choice.

Insurance Acceptance

If you have a conditional offer as your firm choice you can also accept an offer as an insurance choice. Your insurance choice can be conditional or unconditional and acts as a back-up choice to your firm choice. If you meet the conditions for your insurance choice, you are committed to that course so you must choose one you are happy to attend.

Your 'insurance acceptance' is usually a lower offer than your firm choice however in some circumstances it may be beneficial to accept an insurance choice that is equal or higher if you know the University is flexible. It may also be beneficial not to have an insurance choice, depending on the offers you have received. If in doubt please come and seek advice from the Sixth Form team before making any final decisions.

Decline

Once you have made your decisions on your firm and insurance (if any) choices, you must decline all other offers. If you do not want to accept any of the offers, you may decline them all. You will then become eligible for Extra or Clearing, depending upon your circumstances

UCAS 'Extra' provides you with the opportunity to apply for another course if you are not holding any offers and you have used all five choices. It runs from 25 February to 2 July 2015. Through track you can apply for one course at a time using your submitted application. **If you have not received any offers you should come to see a member of the Sixth Form team to discuss your options going forward.**

UCAS Clearing The UCAS Clearing service is available between July and September, but for most it is used after the exam results are published in August. Please see Step 7 for further advice on this process.

Step 7: Getting your Results

Getting Your Results Results will be available in the sixth form block before Track is updated.

Know your login details for Track Make sure you know your login details, as you'll need these to see if you have been accepted on a course. Track should be updated at 8am on the morning of the results. Please do not panic if you have not received a decision by this time.

Be Available You need to be available when the results are published. You may have to make contact with universities and colleges yourself and not leave this to somebody else.

Check your Contact Details Check 'Track' to ensure that your personal details are correct - UCAS and the universities and colleges contact you by email, letter and sometimes by phone so make sure that your details are up-to-date details. If you change your address, please arrange for your mail to be redirected in case letters have already been sent.

If you have not been accepted on a course and have received an unsuccessful offer from your firm and insurance, if applicable, you may go through the **Clearing Process** as follows:

