

# UK University Applications Explained

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Webinar Q&A

# My position and role

- Director of Studies
- Head of Sixth Form and GCSE
- Line Manager to Leader of Faculties
- Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Head of Admissions

# Agenda for the Presentation

1. Deciding a Degree Course
2. Deciding a University
3. What is UCAS?
4. Personal Statement
5. Reference and Predicted Grades
6. Important Dates
7. How does Ashbourne help?
8. Next Webinar and Events
9. Any Questions?



# Deciding a Degree Course



# 1.1

## Deciding a Degree Course

- **Career Pathway** - What do you want to do in the future?
- **Variety of University Degree Choices** - <https://digital.ucas.com/search>
- **Your interests and strengths**
- **Personality Test Tools** - Unifrog
- **University Course Finder based on A-Levels** - Unifrog
- **Get Advice from those informed (Subject-Specialists)**
- **A-Level Subject Recap**

# 1.2

## Deciding a Degree Course

### Recap of A-Level subjects

- Start with four A-Level subjects, but university offers based on three
- Consider your capabilities within the subject
- Keep your options open
- Consider your enjoyment of the subject
- Specific requirements for degree programmes

# 1.3

## Deciding a Degree Course

### Recap of A-Level subjects

- Some subjects are rated higher than others
- Take your own native language in Year 12 if possible
- Consider how subjects compliment each other
- Do not take more than two art subjects
- Take at least one facilitating subject for top universities

A photograph of four young people in a library or study area. In the foreground, a young woman with long brown hair, wearing a denim shirt, is smiling and looking towards the camera. To her right, a young man with short dark hair is also smiling. In the background, two other young women are seated at a table; one is looking down at a book, and the other is looking at a laptop. Bookshelves filled with books are visible in the background.

# Deciding a University



# 2.1

## Deciding a University

- Russell Group Universities
- University Rankings
- Subject-Specific Rankings
- Visit the university (Open Days)
- Ashbourne University Day
- Other Key Factors to Consider

## 2.2

# Deciding a University

## What are Russell Group Universities?

- Collection of 24 top ranking UK universities
- Shared focus on research and a reputation for academic achievement
- Other groups (Alliance), but Russell Group is the most well-known
- Don't forget St Andrews, Lancaster, Bath, Loughborough, UAL (Arts)

## 2.3

# Deciding a University

## Russell Group Universities

- Birmingham
- Bristol
- Cambridge
- Cardiff
- Durham
- Edinburgh
- Exeter
- Glasgow
- Imperial College
- King's College
- Leeds
- Liverpool
- LSE
- Manchester
- Newcastle
- Nottingham
- Oxford
- Queen Mary
- Queen's Belfast
- Sheffield
- Southampton
- UCL
- Warwick
- York

## 2.4

# Deciding a University

Ranking	University	Russell Group
1	Cambridge	YES
2	Oxford	YES
3	St. Andrews	NO
4	LSE	YES
5	Imperial	YES
6	Durham	YES
7	Lancaster	NO
8	Loughborough	NO
9	Bath	NO
10	UCL	YES
11	Exeter	YES
12	Warwick	YES
13	Birmingham	YES
14	Leeds	YES
15	Manchester	YES

## University Rankings

*Source: The Complete University Guide*



## 2.5

# Deciding a University

Medicine	Overall	University
1	2	Oxford
2	1	Cambridge
3	18	Glasgow
4	35	Swansea
5	16	Edinburgh
6	31	Dundee
7	5	Imperial
8	41	Queen Mary
9	52	Keele
10	11	Exeter
11	29	Aberdeen
12	16	Bristol
13	10	UCL
14	22	Newcastle
15	26	Cardiff

Subject-specific University  
Ranking

## 2.6

# Deciding a University

UK Rank	Global Rank	University
1	4	Oxford
2	7	Cambridge
3	8	UCL
4	9	Imperial
5	20	Edinburgh
6	27	Manchester
7	33	KCL
8	44	LSE
9	49	Bristol
10	62	Warwick

QS World Rankings 2020

# 2.7

## Deciding a University

### Open Days

- Best to visit university campuses in person
- You will have until May of Year 13 (2nd year) to decide offers
- We will share a calendar of all Virtual Open Days
- Look out for subject-specific open days
- Ashbourne can help you make a decision

# 2.8

## Deciding a University

### Ashbourne University Day

- February of Year 12
- Universities attend (e.g. Imperial, UCL, LSE)
- University seminar and workshop
- Great opportunity to engage



# 2.9

## Deciding a University

### Other Key Factors to consider

- Location and Environment
- Course Content - degree courses vary significantly
- Grade Requirements
- Be ambitious - You get five choices

A photograph of three students in a computer lab. A young woman with brown hair in a bun, wearing a black and white striped shirt, is smiling and looking at a laptop screen. She is flanked by two young men, one on the left and one on the right, both looking at their respective laptop screens. The background features two large abstract paintings on the wall. A red banner with white text is overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

What is UCAS?

# 3.1

## What is UCAS?

- An independent charity providing information, advice, and admissions services
- Central body which manages UK university applications
- Manages 3 million applications from 700k students

## 3.2

# What is UCAS?

## Your Responsibilities

- Apply to up to five choices (usually different universities)
- Write your Personal Statement
- Complete all sections and send the application
- Communicate with subject-specific UCAS Advisor
- Keep updated about offers and supply additional information
- Accept offers



A young woman with dark hair tied in a bun is focused on painting a canvas. She is wearing a black tank top with a light blue trim and has several rings on her fingers. The background is a blurred art studio with various supplies and other canvases.

# Personal Statement

# 4.1

## Personal Statement

- What is it?
- The Two Important Questions
- Evidencing Your Interest
- Important tips
- What not to do

# 4.2

## Personal Statement

### What is it?

- It is an advertisement of you to the university
- A personal statement supports your application to study at a university
- An opportunity for you to differentiate your application from others
- You can only write one for your five choices
- 4000 characters 47 lines

# 4.3

## Personal Statement

### The Two Important Questions

- Why do you want to study the course?
- What makes you a suitable candidate?

# 4.4

## Personal Statement

### Evidencing your interest

- Demonstrate your interest beyond A-Level learning
- Chance to talk about areas in which you are passionate

*“We want students who are really committed and engaged by the subject they are applying for and in many cases that will mean they need to **demonstrate** they read much wider than would be the case to get through their A-Levels”*

- University of Oxford



# 4.5

## Personal Statement

### Evidencing your interest - How?

- Apprenticeship
- Articles
- Book
- Courses
- Documentaries
- EPQ / Project
- Exhibitions
- Film
- Galleries
- Internship
- Magazine/Journal
- MOOCS
- Online Course
- Podcast
- Talk/Lecture
- Volunteering
- Work Experience

# 4.6

## Personal Statement

### Evidencing your interest - How?

- **Ashbourne has a Super-Curricular Library**
- **Specific to each degree programme**
- **Over 900 entries**
- **Request for more information**

# 4.7

## Personal Statement Evidencing your interest

You need to consider

- What you did
- Why you did it
- What you learnt from it
- How has it changed you? What did it lead to?

*LSE: “Remember we are interested not just in a list of what you have read/encountered, but evidence you have reflected on the academic idea”*

# 4.8

## Personal Statement

### Important Tips

#### Focus your Application Towards One Course

*“One of the major problems is where the personal statements doesn’t relate to the course for which you’ve applied.”*

– University of Oxford

# 4.9

## Personal Statement

### Important Tips

**Main focus should be academics, then extra curricular**

*“Many students like to include some details of their extra-curricular activities such as involvement in sports, the arts, volunteering or student government. As our Selectors are most interested in your academic interests, we recommend that no more than 20% of your statement is spent discussing extra-curricular activities.”*



# 4.10

## Personal Statement

### Important Tips

- Use academic language
- However, do not over complicate
- Clarity is key
- The same applies to A-Level essay responses

# 4.11

## Personal Statement

### Important Tips

#### Stand out from the crowd

- Consider the position of the person reading your statement
- Personalise it
- Be memorable

# 4.12

## Personal Statement

### What not to do?

- *“My father has a computing company and I spent a month working their over the summer. During this time...”*
- *“Ever since I was a child...”*
- *“I am currently studying History, English, Maths and Chemistry...”*
- *“I have always wanted to go to LSE”*

# 4.13

## Personal Statement

### What not to do?

- Don't discuss books in your statement that you haven't read
- Refrain from talking about A-Level content rather than things you have learnt independently
- Avoid famous quotes - *"Martin Luther King said 'I have a dream' and my dream is to study Economics"*
- Do not plagiarise or copy

A photograph of three students in a biology laboratory. A male student in the foreground is using a pipette to transfer liquid into a small vial. A female student stands next to him, looking on. Another student is partially visible in the foreground on the right. The background features educational posters: a yellow one titled 'The Plant Cell', a pink one titled 'BACTERIAL CELL (PROKARYOTE)', and a blue one titled 'ANIMAL CELL (EUKARYOTE)'. There are also green storage bins and a white cabinet in the background.

# Reference and Predicted Grades



# 5.1 Reference and Predicted Grades

## Reference

- Written by UCAS Tutors who are subject specialists
- Suitability for the chosen university course
- Support the information provided in the Personal Statement
- Used as an element of the decision-making process

# 5.2 Reference and Predicted Grades

## Predicted Grades

- Decided by UCAS Tutor in consultation with subject teachers
- Year 12 results are a key factor
- HT1 Mock of Year 13 - 2nd opportunity
- HT2 Mock of Year 13 - 3rd opportunity
- Remember, we want your application ready as soon as possible

# 5.3 Reference and Predicted Grades

**Predicted Grades** should be:

- Aspirational but achievable – stretching predicted grades are motivational for students, unattainable predicted grades are not
- Determined by professional judgement
- Data-driven (Year 12 results/Mocks)
- Flexible up until the application is formally submitted

# 5.4 Reference and Predicted Grades

**Predicted grades should not be:**

- Affected by student, parental, guardian, or carer pressure
- Dictated by university or college entry requirements



# Important Dates



# 6.1

## Important Dates

### Year 12

- May/June end of first year - Year 12 examinations

### Year 13

- Mid-August release of Year 12 results
- 1st October - Conservatoire deadline
- **October 15th** - Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry deadline
- October 31st - Ashbourne Internal Personal Statement deadline
- **January 15th** - All other university courses deadline
- May - Deadline to confirm Firm and Insurance
- Mid-August release of A-Level results

A photograph of three female students in a laboratory setting. They are wearing white lab coats. Two students in the foreground are leaning over a wooden table, looking at something off-camera. The student on the left has long dark hair and wears glasses. The student on the right has brown hair tied back. In the background, another student is visible, also in a lab coat, looking towards the camera. On the table, there are several pieces of laboratory equipment, including a rack of test tubes, a pipette, and some papers. A green banner with white text is overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

How does Ashbourne help?

# 7.1

# How does Ashbourne help?

**We're with you all the way**

- Advising about university choice and degree programme
- Gain offers
- Meet offers
- Prepare for university

# 7.2 How does Ashbourne help?

## Personal Tutor Year 12

- Introducing university application process
- Advising about degree choice and universities
- Draft Personal Statement by end of Year 12
- Summer Plan at end of Year 12
- Working with Specialist Programmes and Subject-Specific Advisors

# 7.3 How does Ashbourne help?

## Specialised Programmes and Subject-Specific Advisor

- Differentiating application through super curricular activity
- Preparation for interviews
- Preparation for assessment tests
- Refinement of Personal Statements
- Personalising Academic Reference



# 7.4 How does Ashbourne help?

## Performance

- 50% A\*A over the last 3 years
- 1 in 5 students gained AAA or above
- Outperforming ALIS by 0.6 grades per entry (BBB to AAB)
- 54% Russell Group Universities
- 1 in 6 to an IOUCL University

A photograph of four people in a modern, brightly lit interior space. On the left, a young man in a dark jacket stands with his hand on the shoulder of a woman with long dark hair. They are both looking towards a man with curly hair and a beard who is seated on a pink sofa, gesturing with his hands as if speaking. Another woman with long blonde hair is seated next to him, listening. The background features a wall with a large, abstract black and white artwork and a window looking out onto a city street. A yellow banner with white text is overlaid at the bottom.

## Next Webinars and Events

# 8.1

## Next Webinars and Events


- **Subject-Specific Webinars** - Monday 1st June 2020 onwards
- **Introduction to A-Level Mathematics** - Prepare for Further Mathematics
- **Literature Essay Competition** - Friday 12th June closing date



9.1

Any Questions?



A photograph of students in a library or study area. In the foreground, a young woman with long brown hair is smiling at the camera. To her right, another student is partially visible, also smiling. In the background, other students are studying, with one looking at a laptop and another at an open book. Bookshelves filled with books are visible in the background.

For any queries, please contact us at  
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