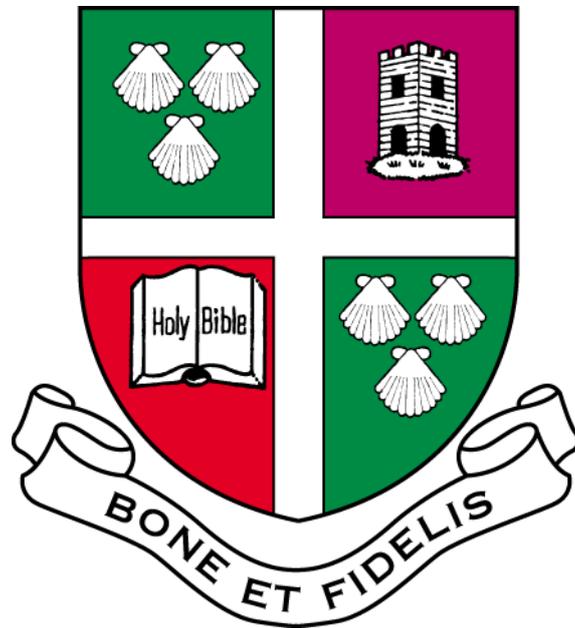


Woodhouse Grove School



After A levels

**for
2016 Entry**

After A levels

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Higher Education

You are about to begin a process of decision making that will have profound implications for your future. You are about to give serious thought to the question of what you are going to do for the three or four years immediately after leaving school. Not only will you be deciding where to spend those years, but you will also be shaping the direction of your future career. The process which begins now will not end when you enter University in September or October 2016 or, in the case of deferred entry, over two years from now in October 2017. It will end when you eventually graduate and gain employment in your chosen career.

Your choice of up to five university courses must be made extremely carefully after detailed individual research and consultation with both careers and subject staff. **If you are unrealistic about your choice of courses you run the risk of receiving very few or even no conditional offers.**

Why Higher Education?

The pros and cons:

Degree

Essential for many professions
More employable generally
Quicker promotion
More money later
University life is fun

Job

Valuable experience of life
Lack of degree may become irrelevant
Start working sooner
More money now

If you have no idea what you want to do eventually for a career, a degree course can delay that decision for a few years whilst broadening your horizons. You can keep many options open by applying to University. If you are in doubt about whether or not to apply, you should apply, to reserve a place. It is more difficult to find a suitable course late in the admissions cycle. Although there is a late application process many of the places will already have been filled and universities do not have to consider your application. You can withdraw from the UCAS process at any stage.

University study allows students to further particular academic interests, whilst the experience of living in a student community with the chance to develop new friendships presents exciting opportunities. Degree level study will allow you to develop new skills and personal qualities such as self-reliance, adaptability and the ability to communicate effectively, all skills that are valued by employers. You also have the opportunity to demonstrate skills by, for example, running a university society or sports team.

Perhaps most important of all, higher education may be a way of obtaining a better job. Some professions, such as Medicine, have been “graduate only” for many years but as more graduates enter the job market a higher education qualification is increasingly becoming the

norm. However, the recent rise in university fees has brought a response from employers. There is an increasing number of apprenticeships available in areas such as IT, finance and law which provide an alternative route to professional qualifications. These apprenticeships have entry requirements similar to those for a degree course.

Having a university place to aim for can be a good motivator. The offer of a place conditional on achieving particular grades can act as 'the light at the end of the tunnel' to help you to maximise your achievement at A level.

Despite these advantages, you do not necessarily have to go to university. There are increasing financial pressures on students and you may feel that you do not wish to continue studying. A few students drop out of university. Often, this is the result of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. **If you are not content with your surroundings you will not do well.** University is about far more than just your course of study – it is about your learning being developed through the people you meet and the things you do. Everyone has different needs, abilities and ambitions, and they must all be carefully taken into account when deciding about higher education. Your course must interest you deeply **and** you must be happy about where you have chosen to live.

Research and Decisions

For university applicants, the occasional injustices of the system form a lesson that is best understood before starting out. University entry is based on the principle that students are selected by those who will teach them. The student is not selected by the UCAS computer or by a university's central administration but by the subject department or faculty teaching the course the student wants to take. Different universities have different admissions policies, and admissions procedures may vary between departments and/or colleges within the same university.

Although universities take a great deal of time and care to perfect their admissions system, the sheer volume of applications occasionally leads to flaws in the system. Almost all of our students receive offers of places from almost all of the courses which they choose. However, some courses, especially in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, law or English, are very heavily over-subscribed by excellent candidates, and not every applicant can be offered a place. Care must be taken to try to avoid applying for places on five very competitive courses. There is a real risk that such a set of choices could lead to the candidate being unsuccessful in gaining a place on any of their chosen courses.

You are more likely to make a successful application if you:

- (a) start your research **early**;
- (b) recognise that the onus is on **you** to make **your own** decisions;
- (c) make your choices **sensibly**;
- (d) **listen** to advice.

There are no short cuts and you have many hours of research ahead of you. Ultimately **it is your decision made with our help.**

The three choices:- subject, course, university.

1. The choice of subject

You **must** start with the choice of **subject**. Considerable research is necessary here as there are many hundreds different subjects available in universities, and the number of degree courses has increased greatly in recent years.

The web site www.ukcoursefinder.com may help you to identify suitable areas for study.

If you have already formed some idea about the career you eventually wish to pursue, then a **vocational** course is a possibility. Indeed for some professions, a particular degree might be a necessity. However, you must know what the career actually involves – in particular, the length of training, and the nature of the work. If you are simply attracted to the status and salary of a career, and have little or no knowledge of the demands that it will make, then you are approaching the issue in the wrong way and may well make a foolish choice. Vocational courses exempt you from some professional examinations, but taking a vocational degree does **not** commit you to follow a particular career – it is a measure of intellectual attainment. At least half of all job vacancies (such as in Marketing, Publishing, Management and the Civil Service) are available to graduates in any field. Many students who take vocational courses find employment in fields other than that of their degree.

You might choose a subject stemming from your A-level courses and interests, where your intellectual curiosity has already been stimulated. You might not want to confine your studies to one subject; there are a very large number of joint or combined honours courses available.

You might want to choose an entirely new subject such as Philosophy, Sociology or Engineering.

Remember that a future employer will be looking for evidence of your academic ability, initiative and determination – all qualities that are needed to obtain a degree in **any** subject. The subject matter is far less important than the development of your skills of analysis, evaluation, initiative, communication and presentation. Graduate employment is increasingly about **the quality of the degree, the quality of the applicant and their extracurricular activities whilst at university**. However, if there are specific degree requirements for a particular career you need to find out about them **now**.

Your choice of subject needs careful thought and extensive research.

2. The choice of course

Types of courses

Once you have decided on a subject of study, you must then investigate features of the courses on offer at the various institutions with a view to finding some that specially appeal. Courses can differ considerably in both approach and content.

The university's own webpages will have the most detailed information about the content of each course.

Essentially there are seven types of courses:

Single Honours – One subject is studied within which a range of specialist options is generally provided. There is sometimes a “Foundation Year” during which several related subjects are studied, though not in very great depth.

Joint Honours – Two separate but equal subjects are studied which may or may not be related e.g. History and French; Economics and Accountancy. (There can be sometimes be little, or no, co-ordination between the departments) Sometimes there is a “major” and a “minor” subject.

Combined Honours – Several subjects are studied, which may or may not be related, often narrowing as the course progresses to one or two subjects e.g. Combined Science; Combined Social Science.

Interdisciplinary Courses – Several subjects are studied, all related to a particular theme e.g. American Studies; Environmental Studies; Media Studies.

Sandwich Courses – These are alternating periods of study and related work placements, normally lasting four years, although some are extended to five years.

Modular Courses – A wide variety of “unit” courses is offered and the student selects his/her own programme, often after a common subject first year. Credits are built up towards a single, joint or combined honours degree.

Foundation Degrees – Usually a two year course for students who have not done appropriate A-levels for the course they wish to study, or who have not achieved sufficiently high A-level grades to be accepted onto an honours degree course. A further one year of study after a foundation degree can produce the equivalent of an honours degree.

Courses with the same or similar name (such as History) may vary considerably in content from one institution to another. Be particularly wary of joint courses with seemingly identical titles. For example, Business Studies *with* German means that Business Studies is the major subject and German is the minor subject; Business Studies *and* German means that equal time is allocated to each subject; Business Studies and German *Business* lays stress on German Business, and not on German language or literature.

Note that not all subjects are offered at every University.

Most courses take three years, but many extend to four, five or six. The latter includes courses in Medicine, Veterinary Science, Dentistry and Architecture; courses in Scottish Universities and at Brunel and Keele Universities; many Engineering courses; courses with practical training (i.e. most modern languages and courses and sandwich courses everywhere); and increasing numbers of courses in Applied Science, Technology and Social Sciences.

Many courses offer up to a year of study in the European Union under the SOCRATES-ERASMUS scheme. An increasing number of universities offer courses with the possibility of a semester, or a whole year, of study in America.

What you should look for in a degree course:

You should select your course before you select your University. It is important to recognise that courses are not necessarily better than one another, but simply different. The “**best course**” is the one that suits **you** most. A course which demands higher grades is not necessarily “better” than one accepting lower grades; the grade requirement reflects the number of students competing for places on a particular course.

UNISTATS is a government website which provides detailed information about costs, student satisfaction, graduate salaries and contact time for UK university courses. It has a useful ‘compare’ function.

Questions your research should answer include:

- Is the course largely theoretical, practical, or vocational?
- What kind of teaching? Lectures or tutorials, or both? Seminars? How regular and frequent are tutorial and seminars? How many students will be at them? Are they formal or informal? Who does the teaching? Seminars may be led by graduate students or by lecturers.
- How many contact hours with tutors? How much free/study time?
- How much written work? How much laboratory work? Are there workshops? Is there audio-visual teaching?
- Are there written examinations or continuous assessment? Or both? How much work can you expect to have marked?
- How much specialisation and how early? How wide is the range of course options?
- Is the course modular?
- What library or laboratory facilities are there?
- What is the balance between lectures, tutorials, practicals, projects, dissertations, teamwork and private study?
- Is the stress on personal academic development or on participative group learning?
- Do final examinations give any exemption from the academic requirements of professional bodies? (This is particularly relevant to Law courses.)
- Do I need the structure and discipline of a course with regular assignments and exams? Do I need an equivalent monitoring system? Or am I ready for a greater measure of freedom and self-direction?
- What are the department’s views of a gap year?
- What is the employability record of graduates from this course?
- UNISTATS can answer some of these questions; others are best explored at an open day.

If you are planning to study a “new” subject at university, then some background reading is essential. You need to be certain that you have a genuine academic interest in the discipline concerned.

In choosing a course, you should be confident that it matches your interests, abilities and plans. However there is another important factor – you must be confident that you have a reasonable chance of getting a place on the course! This consideration is intimately linked with your choice of Universities.

3. The Choice of University

Which University?

It is essential that you should apply to universities where the right courses and learning conditions are available, and where you have a realistic chance of acceptance. Only you can establish what are the right courses and learning conditions: no two applicants are likely to take the same view.

There is no such thing as a “good” or a “poor” university – all universities have their particular strengths and weaknesses. It is dangerous to rely solely on the accumulated wisdom of parents, teachers and friends. Reputation is also a most unreliable measure of quality because staff and course changes are constantly taking place. Detailed research is essential. Sources of information include UNISTATS and various university guides published by the Times, Virgin, the Guardian, The Complete University Guide and others. Opinions will vary from guide to guide. When you have decided on your subject and course, you should seriously consider the following factors:

- **Size and facilities** – sports, social, career-related activities? How social are you? University life is socially intense and exposed. Are you gregarious or outgoing enough to enjoy the closed society of a small university or collegiate unit which is remote from a large town or city, and which creates its own world? Or do you like the idea of an easy escape into a larger, wider community?
- **Location** – in a city centre? (e.g. Leeds, Newcastle) – a campus on the edge of town? (e.g. Reading, Exeter) – in ancient buildings in a small city? (e.g. Durham, St. Andrews) – in a rural location? (e.g. East Anglia). Distance from home? Cost of travel?
- **Accommodation** – Halls of residence? Self-catering? Approved lodgings? Flats? Bedsits? Availability of each? Location of each? Cost of each? Remember that most universities will offer university owned or managed accommodation for the first year only, so the nature of the university’s accommodation should not weigh too heavily in the balance.
- **Entry requirements** – grades and specific subjects needed for both the university in general and for your course in particular.
- **Modes of assessments**
- **Employability of graduates**, which may vary between courses at one university (look at UNISTATS).

Types of Universities

Every university has its own distinct character. Some are large, while others are small and intimate. Some are in the centres of big towns and cities and have a strongly urban character whereas others are to be found in the suburbs or the country. Some have buildings scattered about a town centre, while others are concentrated on one site, commonly called a “campus”. Some campuses are central and tightly packed, whilst others are out of town, self contained and pleasantly landscaped.

Wherever you choose to apply, you must select the kind of places that will suit you best and offer the kind of environment and activities from which you will benefit.

Universities can be broadly categorised as follows:

- **Civic Universities** – sited centrally in, and interacting closely with a major city. Halls of Residence (often some distance from the University) form separate and lively communities. Examples include Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield.
- **City Campus Universities** – Universities that have developed just outside their cities. Birmingham, Exeter, Nottingham and Reading have sites large enough to contain academic buildings and a large proportion of residential accommodation. Hull and Leicester have academic sites a mile or so from the city centre with accommodation complexes two miles further out. Southampton is on the outskirts of the city with scattered halls of residence.
- **Greenfield Campus Universities** – mainly the 1960s wave of new universities established on green field sites, and designed as self-sufficient, self-contained social and academic units. East Anglia, Essex, Keele, Sussex, Warwick, York.
- **Collegiate Universities** – Oxford, Cambridge (and in a different way Durham, Lancaster and Kent).
- **London** – each constituent college is of the size of a full-scale university and functions as such (e.g. Goldsmiths, Imperial, Kings, LSE, Queen Mary, Royal Holloway, SOAS, UCL).
- **Technological Universities** – have their roots in the old technical and technological colleges with close links to industry. They offer courses with strong technological bias on hi-tech campuses. Examples include Aston, Bath, Bradford, Brunel, City, Loughborough, Salford, Surrey.
- **Scottish Universities** – Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt, St. Andrews, Stirling, Strathclyde. All Scottish universities offer four-year courses and have a more open structure to most degree courses (Medicine, Law and Divinity are generally exceptions). Students are admitted to a faculty rather than a specific department and can usually select three of four subjects in their first year from a wide range of possible courses. It is possible to be admitted directly to the second year of a degree course with sufficiently high A-level grades. A law degree from a Scottish university is unlikely to give exemption from English law professional exams.
- **Irish Universities** – Northern Ireland: Queen’s Belfast and Ulster are part of the UCAS system
- **Irish Universities** – Dublin, Cork etc: application is by a central admissions service similar to UCAS, called the CAO.

- **“New” Universities** – former polytechnics that became universities in their own right in 1992. All award their own degrees and offer a full range of courses, both vocational and non-vocational, at degree and diploma level. They are often an amalgamation of several former colleges, and are sometimes spread across a number of campuses. Many have a close liaison with industry, and some have a very good reputation. Examples are Oxford Brookes, Northumbria, Nottingham Trent, University of the West of England (in Bristol), Manchester Met.
- **Russell Universities** – A self-selected group, named because of a meeting of universities held in the Russell Hotel in London. These universities consider themselves to constitute the “Premier Division”. A full list is given below:

Birmingham	London School of Economics (L.S.E.)
Bristol	Manchester
Cambridge	Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Cardiff	Nottingham
Durham	Oxford
Edinburgh	Queen Mary, London
Exeter	Queen’s, Belfast
Glasgow	Sheffield
Imperial College, London	Southampton
King’s College, London	UCL (University College London)
Leeds	Warwick
Liverpool	York

Studying Abroad

There are various reasons why students may want to move abroad for university. It might be to do with the range of courses offered, finance, or simply to broaden their experience and make the stand out amongst other graduates.

Studying abroad could be as part of a course at a UK university. Many universities offer up to a year abroad for certain courses through the ERASMUS-SOCRATES scheme. Typically, you would only pay 15% of the usual fees for that year. Some courses manage this year abroad as part of a 3 year course, whilst others have it as the 3rd year of a 4 year degree.

There are two different ranking sites that may be of use in your research. QS World Rankings: <http://www.topuniversities.com> and The Times <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/>

Study in Europe

European universities offer an ever increasing range of courses taught in English.

Several universities in Europe have courses including **medicine, dentistry and pharmacy** that are taught in English. Eg Prague, Budapest. Each course is applied for separately with a separate application fee.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands has the largest range of courses taught in English. Fees are usually €1900 per year (although courses at the prestigious University Colleges are double this). Course cover everything from the liberal arts and sciences course at the university colleges, to medicine, economics, engineering, European law, music, hotel management and hundreds more.

The process of applying is straightforward. Most course and universities use a central application system on www.studielink.nl.

Finland, Norway and Sweden

There are no fees for courses in Finland, Norway and Sweden. There is a wide range of courses taught in English, from economics to animation to sports management.

Other European Options

Other countries that offer courses in English include Malta (Medicine and a huge range of courses that are free); Estonia, Poland, Spain, Ireland, Italy (medicine and engineering); Germany, France, Belgium – and others.

American Universities – Studying in America can be very expensive but many universities offer sports scholarships to overseas students. If you are considering this option you should already be practising the standard aptitude tests (SATs) necessary for entry. Applications are made directly to each university with a separate application fee. Further information can be found on the website collegeboard.com The application process should be started in the Lower Sixth, so students should see Mrs Ainscoe as soon as possible and certainly before Easter of year 12.

Students should familiarise themselves with the following websites: www.collegeboard.com and www.Fulbright.org.uk. SAT exams will need to be taken in the summer term of Year 12 or at the very latest in the early Autumn term of year 13. When SAT exam results are known, there will be a better idea of the types of university that you would be eligible to apply to. Some universities use the Common Application System (similar to UCAS) whilst others you apply to direct. There are usually essays to be completed and maybe subject based tests too. Costs of attending a US university are inclusive of fees and board and are typically \$27,000 – \$65,000 per year. However, these costs are often means tested and even with a household income of say £100,000 there could be a 50% discount.

There are UK based businesses that offer services to find university places with scholarships- these may be sport and/or academic. InTuition Scholarships is one such service.

<http://www.student-scholarships.com>. Following SAT exams, you pay them a fee and they guarantee to find 9 scholarships places with at least 2 of these with a \$20,000 reduction per year. If they don't find you the scholarships then you get your money back.

Overseas study elsewhere – Students from WGS have also gone on to study at universities in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Grenada.

As with UK university applications, pupils will be supported through the process of applying to universities outside of the UK.

Alternatives to University

The following websites will be of use:

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

www.apprenticeships.org.uk

With government funding for new “Higher Apprenticeships”, and businesses not always happy with the quality of graduates to choose from, there has been a huge increase in positions for A Level school leavers.

Vacancies usually start becoming available to apply for in September/October and go right through to the following summer. All positions include significant training, often with a paid for degree, and usually very good pay. Bulletins are produced and emailed each month to Year 13 students to let them see the current vacancies. Help and support is available in school for applying for the positions including help with the online tests and assessment centres that many of the recruiters use. Most vacancies require 2 or 3 A Levels, usually between grades A and D, depending on the firm and type of job.

Examples of current higher apprenticeship recruiters:

The “Big 4” accountancy firms: KPMG, Deloitte, Ernst and Young, and PwC

Jaguar Land Rover

The National Grid

Rolls Royce

Unilever

BAE Systems

Marks and Spence

Nestle

Boots

Plus many more.....

Examples of pay/training package for an A Level leaver:

Rolls Royce (Derby)

Engineering manufacture

A-Level – Grades A* to C in Maths, Physics/Chemistry and one other

GCSE – Grades A* to C English Language, a relevant Science

£200 per week to start

National Grid

£451 per week to start.

Fully funded degree. Car. Pension scheme.

Various positions mainly engineering of different types. Initially based in Nottinghamshire, but then roles throughout the country.

Two A Levels: Grades A*-C (one must be in either Maths or Physics)

Boots

Programmes in HR, Finance, IT, Supply Chain, Branding, marketing and buying.

240 points. Starting salary £15,000. Degree level qualifications included.

Prospectuses, Visits and Open Days

All universities have websites; the UCAS website, www.ucas.com, has links to individual university sites. University prospectuses and websites can be glossy exercises in marketing. Their range quality and accuracy are very variable. Alternative Prospectuses (produced by students) are usually readable and informative, but also uneven and highly subjective. You are advised to treat all such literature with caution.

All universities also offer Open Days that provide you with an opportunity to talk with academic staff and students. The value of this exercise varies from place to place, and you should select your Open Days carefully. Open Days organised by university subject departments are invariably much more useful than general university open days. Some universities and courses offer worthwhile taster days.

Remember that repeated absence from school will disrupt your academic courses and therefore jeopardise your academic progress; for this reason we suggest you restrict yourself to a maximum of three visits in school time. Many universities have Saturday Open Days. These should be preferred to school days.

Finance

The **student finance** system is complex, and the cost of a university degree is now rather higher than it was a few years ago.

In outline: UK who plan to go to university in 2016 can apply for support with tuition fees, maintenance or both. EU students can apply for support for fees but not for maintenance. We will advise students when the application process opens (usually online, between February and a deadline in May) and will guide them through the process. UK and EU students are charged up to a maximum of £9000 per year for tuition even though the full cost of university tuition can be as much as £25 000 per year, depending on the course and the university. A few courses charge fees lower than the £9000 maximum. Fees can be borrowed in full from the student loan company by any UK or EU based student and no repayment is expected until the student has graduated and earns more than £21,000 a year. All students **must** make an application to their local authority for funding of the excess tuition fee above the contribution which students themselves pay.

In addition, all UK students are entitled to receive repayable student loans to cover part of the cost of maintenance. Some students will be eligible for a non repayable grant and also for non repayable scholarships from their universities. Maintenance loans and grants are also applied for online. Grants and most scholarships are awarded in relation to household income, with maximum financial support available for those with a household income under £25 000 per year, and no grant currently available where the family income exceeds around £42,600. Any student loan, whether for fees or maintenance, which is outstanding after 30 years will be written off as long as payments are not in arrears.

The student finance calculator on [direct.gov.uk](https://www.direct.gov.uk) will give an estimate of your entitlement to funding.

Reminders

Remember that university is not an extension of school. Teaching methods are very different. Lecturers lecture, often to very large groups, and do not stop to answer questions or to sort out difficulties and misunderstandings. You have to work these out for yourself later. Work will be set and marked, but you will be expected to organise yourself and will not be reminded or nagged in school fashion if you fail to do so. However, you will run the real risk of not completing the course, which can be expensive both in financial and personal terms. You would be older than when you left school, but would have no more qualifications and, almost certainly, more debts.

Remember too that the course you do and the institution you do it at must be your own personal choice. Teachers and parents can advise, but it is you who will be doing the course, not them. This means that it must be right for you.

Despite all the apparent difficulty of application, going to university can be an immensely rewarding experience which will have a positive impact on the rest of your life. It is worthwhile spending the necessary time and effort getting it right at the beginning of the process.

Guidance will be given about how to complete your UCAS form nearer the time, but you must start thinking seriously about what you want to study and where you want to study it now. Good luck. Remember that Sixth Form and Careers Staff are always available to help if you get stuck. If in doubt, ask.

Timetable

Wednesday 25 February	Introduction to life after A-levels followed by Parents' Evening
Mon 11 May	AS exams start
Mon 8 June	A2 teaching begins
Weds 17 June	UCAS Fair at Leeds Metropolitan University
June/July	University open days (e.g. Manchester Sat 20 June, Oxford July 1 and 2, Leeds 19, 20 and 26 June, Cambridge 2 and 3 July)
Thurs 13 August	AS module results
Wed 2 September	Start of upper sixth year
Mon 21 September	WGS target for completion of UCAS applications to Oxbridge, Medical Schools and Russell Universities
Mon 2 November	WGS target for completion of all other UCAS applications
Oct 2015 to April 2016	Students receive offers of university places
Spring 2016	Students must complete student finance application
Late April 2016	Students notify UCAS of firm and insurance offers.
Thurs 12 August 2016	A-level results are published and Clearing begins
Sep/Oct 2016	University courses begin

Applying to Higher Education: useful websites

Making decisions

www.ukcoursefinder.com/

will ask you questions about your interests and aptitudes and suggest suitable courses for you. This is a very useful place to start.

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/tools/skillshealthcheck/Pages/default.aspx>

Check which skills are relevant for which occupation

<http://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/>

Lets you explore non-university routes beyond school.

<http://www.push.co.uk/>

Describes itself as 'an independent guide to all things studentish'

www.prospects.ac.uk/

is aimed more at graduates, but has a very useful *prospects planner* which has a diagnostic section for working out which job might suit you.

HE Courses and general information

www.ucas.com

has direct links to all university websites. Particularly useful are their *course search* and *entry profiles*.

<http://www.scholarship-search.org.uk/>

Potential help with finance

<http://www.beyondbakedbeans.org/>

suggestions for student food on a budget

<http://www.fulbright.org.uk/>

gateway for information about study in the USA.

www.studentbook.org/

is the online version of the Trotman book of the same name. It has wealth of information about courses, universities and fees.

Useful Publications available in the Library.

Degree Course Offers – Brian Heap. Extremely useful guide to the tariff points required for entry into every university course in the United Kingdom. It is organised by subject but is also a mine of information on other important questions such as number of applicants per place, reasons for rejection etc.

The Times Good University Guide. One of the most comprehensive studies of British Universities available today. It contains a wealth of statistical information as well as grading every university on its own ranking system. Contents also available at www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/education/good_university_guide/

The Guardian University Guide. A very similar publication to the one above. Contents also available at www.guardian.co.uk/education/universityguide

The Virgin Alternative Guide to Universities. This book is written for potential students by existing students. It focuses on the benefits of both the academic and extra-curricular life of every university and university town in the United Kingdom.

Choosing your Degree Course and University – Trotman. Another helpful guide to the range of courses on offer at different universities.

The Directory of University and College Entry – Trotman. This publication focuses on the entry requirements for each university and is broken down by subject. It is very similar to the Brian Heap guide listed above.

University Scholarships and Awards – Brian Heap. This book guides potential students through the maze of financial help that is available and offers advice on to how to go about applying for scholarships.

Best University and College Courses – Brian Heap. Where is the best place to go to study a particular subject? This publication will try to answer this and other important questions.

Taking a Gap Year – Susan Griffith. This book looks at how to make the best use of gap year and offers advice on what to do.

UCAS Tariff

Universities make conditional offers based on A-level grades, or tariff points or a combination of the two.

AS	
Grade	Points
A* ¹	70
A	60
B	50
C	40
D	30
E	20

A level	
Grade	Points
A*	140
A	120
B	100
C	80
D	60
E	40

BTEC		
Subsidiary Diploma (Y13)	Certificate (Y12)	Points
D*		140
Distinction		120
		100
Merit		80
	D*	70
	Distinction	60
Pass	Merit	40
	Pass	20

A*¹ The extended project qualification (EPQ) carries the same points as an AS with the addition of an A* grade which scores 70 points. This is the only AS for which the A* grade is awarded.

The Diploma in Finance is graded in the same way as an A level; the Certificate in Finance is graded as an A level. Many universities, to include Durham, will accept these qualifications, sometimes as grades, sometimes as points especially for finance-related courses.

General Studies can be a useful extra subject to provide UCAS points, but check that the course you want will accept it. Other sources of UCAS points include the ASDAN award and music, drama and dance qualifications at grades above grade 5.

UCAS offers can be very subtle. Please ask for advice if you are unsure.

Eg the following offers are superficially all the same but have slightly different requirements:

An offer could be

BBC ie a student has to achieve a minimum of these grades, without any particular subjects stipulated

Or the offer could be 'a B in Chemistry A level and BC in two other A level subjects'

Or the offer could exclude specific subjects eg 'BBC excluding General Studies'

Or the offer could be 280 points – this could be achieved as BBC, as ABD or could be made up of a mixture of A level and AS points

Or the offer could be 280 points from a maximum of four qualifications (eg 3 A levels and one AS, or 4 A levels, or 3 A levels and a Diploma or Certificate in Finance)

Or the offer could be 280 points to include 200 points from two A levels

