

Applying to Higher Education

2017 Entry

**Student Guide
Mackie Academy**

UCAS Applications 2017

How do I get started?

1. Get hold of prospectuses for any courses, universities and colleges you are interested in. If a course appears in a prospectus, always double check that it is running by accessing Course Search at www.ucas.com. Just be aware that the most up to date information can be found online.
2. Ask family, friends and professionals for their help. You should not be afraid to ask.
3. Visit www.ucas.com. It has a comprehensive online database of over 50,000 HE courses available at over 300 universities and colleges that are members of UCAS. Nearly half have "entry profiles", which give extra information such as content of course; who it might be suitable for; what the entry requirements are; how it is assessed and potential career opportunities. The site also includes information on fees, bursaries and financial support for individual universities and colleges. It also has links to the individual websites of the universities and colleges so that further details can be found easily. Entry profiles make it easier to differentiate between courses which have similar names.
4. Visit www.ucas.tv. UCAS tv is the latest way for applicants to get information about higher education. As well as "how to" guides it has video diaries from students in higher education that may allay your fears about higher education.
5. Go to Open Days as this is a great way to get a feel for the place. It is very difficult to make your mind up by just reading a prospectus or visiting a website. If you go to the website www.opendays.com you will be able to find all university open days listed along with contact details.
6. Enrol on Taster courses – a number of universities and colleges offer these. Most are free, and they vary in length from one day to one week. They are designed to be as realistic as possible, with lectures and tutorials, and give students the chance to mingle with others who share their academic interests. Demonstrating commitment to a course, in this way, can be useful for your personal statement.
7. Podcasts – a number of universities and colleges are providing podcast material, free to download, through iTunes.
8. Unistats – this website brings together a wealth of authoritative, official information, enabling applicants to compare subjects at UK universities and colleges. It includes destinations from higher education and the results of student satisfaction surveys. See <https://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>
9. University Facebook pages – the HE student network is full of features for students thinking about going to university or college. It is a good way to ask questions as part of the student community.

At the end of this process you will need to make a decision about what courses and universities you are going to apply for. For applications in 2017 the maximum number of choices for UCAS is **five**. If you are applying in any of the following areas you can only make a maximum of **four** applications:

- Medicine
- Dentistry
- Veterinary Medicine or Science

You can only apply to either Cambridge or Oxford, not both, regardless of what course you are applying to.

In making your decisions about course choices and location you must take into consideration the **consistency** of your application. If you apply for 5 different courses then it will be very difficult to write a personal statement that matches all five courses. However, institutions only get to see the information about their course choice – they do not get to see your other choices nor should ask for such information from applicants. Also, if you apply for 5 courses where the points score offer is consistently higher than what you are going to be predicted then there is a greater chance that you will be rejected by all institutions. **Your course choices must match what you are going to be predicted by your teachers.** Your predicted grade report will be ready **week beginning 3rd October 2016**.

Deadlines for Applications

If you are applying for Music, Dance or Drama courses you have two options. For full time undergraduate courses you apply through UCAS with the deadlines as outlined below. If your preference is for practice-based courses, you apply through UCAS Conservatoires, which is now part of the UCAS suite of offers. It used to be called CUKAS just in case you see reference to this.

The courses offered by conservatoires are creative and varied. You can choose to study full or part-time and can specialise in one or more instruments / areas. You can make up to six applications.

If you cannot make up your mind, why not apply through both systems? You can make applications through UCAS and UCAS Conservatoires, then decide which course to take later in the year. **The deadlines for applications through UCAS Conservatoires is 1st October 2016** for Music courses and for most Drama and Performing courses it is **15th January 2017**. However, it is worthwhile checking individual conservatoire websites for details.

Oxford and Cambridge Universities have a deadline of **15th October 2016**. Applications for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine and Science must reach UCAS by **15th October 2016**. This applies to the following courses:

Medicine – Course codes A100, A101, A102, A103, A104, A105, A106 and A300.

Dentistry – Course codes A200, A201, A202, A203, A204, A205, A206 and A400.

Veterinary Medicine or Science – D100, D101 and D102.

To ensure that the appropriate quality assurance checks take place prior to the deadline all applications for these courses must be submitted to your Guidance teacher by **Friday, 7th October 2016**.

For all other courses the deadline for UCAS is **15th January 2017**, apart from some Art and Design courses which have a deadline of **24th March 2017**. However, the sooner the application is with UCAS the sooner it starts to be processed and the more likely you are to get offers from your chosen university. Therefore, the deadline for all UCAS applications at Mackie Academy will be **Monday, 5th December 2016**. This is to ensure that we have time to do the appropriate quality assurance checks before applications are sent through to UCAS. We aim to have all applications submitted to us by this date prior to the Christmas holidays.

If you are applying for Art and Design courses please make sure that you are aware as to whether they have a deadline for 15th January 2017 or 24th March 2017. If you are applying for the second deadline it is your responsibility to ensure that your PT Pupil Support and Attainment is aware of this.

The same closing dates apply for deferred applications. Before choosing to defer a student should contact individual universities or colleges direct to check that they will consider a deferred application. In some cases the course may not be offered until the following year. Students defer through Apply by choosing the appropriate start date for a future course. Students applying for deferred entry need to be aware that they will still be expected to meet entry requirements by 31st August 2018.

The "Cooling Off" Period

Applicants will now have seven calendar days in which to withdraw their application and receive a refund of their application fee, and seven calendar days in which to change their choices of institution or course.

Late Applications

Applications that reach UCAS between 16th January 2017 and 30th June 2017 and Art and Design course applications received after 25th March 2016 will be considered by the universities and colleges at their discretion. They can take until the 19th July 2017 to make any decisions about late applications so it is best avoided if at all possible. Any applications received after 30th June 2017 will immediately be transferred into the clearing system.

Disabilities, Special Needs and Medical Conditions

Universities and colleges welcome such applications and try to provide as much support as possible. There is more information at www.ucas.com/students/disabledstudents/ Applicants who need support in their

studies, accommodation or daily living should contact their chosen universities and colleges who will want to know the course the applicant is interested in, the nature and extent of the disability, special need or medical condition and any arrangements that the applicant has needed or found helpful in the past.

UCAS Extra

If students are rejected from all of their choices or choose to reject their choices they can participate in UCAS Extra. This allows students to look at courses and universities and courses that still have availability and apply for places. This process will be put automatically in place by UCAS if this situation arises. This takes place from 25th February 2017 to 4th July 2017. UCAS will contact you directly if you become eligible for the Extra process. Applicants apply for courses in Extra by using a special button that appears in the 'Track' part of their application.

Adjustment

If an applicant has both met and exceeded the conditions of their firmly accepted offer, they have up to five days from the time their place was confirmed to research places which correspond to their better performance. Applicants have to nominate themselves for this system and their eligibility will be confirmed by the institution they apply to adjust to.

The process of Adjustment is only available for two weeks from 17th – 31st August 2017. Participation is entirely the choice and responsibility of the applicant. Opportunities will always be limited and there is no guarantee that there will be any vacancies on the course the student wants to be considered for. It is unlikely that the most competitive courses will have any places available.

Clearing

This takes place after results are received in August and aims to allow students who have not gained their chosen university place to look at other options and gain a place in higher education. Students need to be available in person to deal with admissions tutors and make decisions. You should plan your summer holiday so that you are at home when the exam results come out.

UCAS use 'Track' to tell eligible applicants when and how they can use Clearing and to give them their Clearing Numbers.

Lists of courses with places available are published on the UCAS website as well as in several national newspapers. Students must make the contact themselves with the relevant universities. If they are offered a place applicants must enter the details of the institution and course into Track and the university or college will then confirm the place provided it is still available. If the student is unsuccessful they may repeat the process.

Applying to UCAS

This is now a 100% online process. You can access the "Apply" process through www.ucas.com. This can be done anywhere that has internet access. Details can be reworked and resaved on the application as often as necessary before submitting the final version to your college administrator. At this point all details will be checked fully by the College Administrator and any errors will be referred back to students.

Students require a **buzzword** to access this system. This will be provided to you prior to the summer break and will allow you to start your application over the summer break.

Students are invited to include their unit grades for certified qualifications. This information is optional but in the more competitive courses you may improve your chances of being offered a place if you provide this information. UCAS have improved their qualifications set for entry so hopefully applicants will not struggle to find the right qualifications for entry into their application.

The cost for a UCAS application for 2017 is £24. Payment must be completed as part of your application process so you will need to be able to pay for this online. If you have any major difficulties with this please see your PT Pupil Support and Attainment.

Personal Statements

Students must write a personal statement that uses the following administrative information:

Number of Characters: 4000 (approximately 47 lines in UCAS)

Font: Courier New

Size: 12

Margins: Top and Bottom Margins 3.8cm; Left and Right Margins 1.5cm

The personal statement must be checked by the student's reference writer. It is advisable for students to submit at least one draft. Students should be aware that staff cannot write a reference until the personal statement has been completed. This is to ensure that information is not repeated in the two pieces of work. Therefore, students must ensure that their personal statements are written well within the deadlines set to ensure that staff have adequate time to write their references.

The deadline for Oxbridge / Medicine / Dentistry / Veterinary Applicants to have the first draft of their personal statement to their reference writer is **Monday, 12th September 2016**. Final deadline for personal statements is **Friday, 30th September 2016**.

All applications will be completed by **Friday, 7th October 2016** to ensure that they reach their destination by the deadline of 15th October 2016.

The deadline for all other applicants to have the first draft of their personal statement to their reference writer is **Monday, 3rd October 2016**. The final deadline for personal statements is **Monday, 31st October 2016**. All applications will be submitted for quality assurance checks by **Monday, 28th November 2016**. All applications submitted by this deadline will be with UCAS by **the Christmas holidays** to ensure that students gain the offers that they want from their chosen institutions.

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER IN WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Your personal statement should be based on key paragraph construction.

The final version should be short and succinct. Don't waffle!!

Draft first and then condense – much better to have too much than too little.

Do not make it institution specific – remember it has to go to 5 choices. You must show interest in the course – show knowledge about content and structure.

Motivation and enthusiasm must be evident for the subject. It is essential that universities see wider reading, areas of interest and potential in what they read.

Longer term career objectives show that you have given your course choice significant thought.

Work Experience and / or voluntary work can be valuable if it can contribute to your course choice or your personal development.

Specific contacts in your subject area shows in-depth knowledge – don't mention a name if you can't discuss them and their work fully!!!

Skills, strengths and personality must come through.

IF YOU ARE TAKING A GAP YEAR YOU MAY WISH TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING POINTS IN ADDITION TO THOSE ABOVE:

If you are having a gap year please tell them why? It is not a good idea to put "because I need a rest"!!

Think about any specific subject knowledge or skills that you intend to develop that will be of relevance to your choice of course at university.

Useful Websites

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education www.qaa.ac.uk/students

Gives independent information about academic standards and quality in relation to courses at specific institutions.

UCAS Tariff System <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/entry-requirements/tariff>

Gives information on what all qualifications are worth in relation to the UCAS tariff. It is essential that students know this information for making the correct choices. It is also worth noting that the tariff tables change in 2017 so if you are intending to have a gap year then you need to take this into account.

Entry Tests for University

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/entry-requirements>

Gives information on all tests that students must take for particular course requirements.

Research Record of Universities www.rae.ac.uk

This highlights the last research assessment exercise completed in 2008. It focuses on the amount and type of research that institutions are involved in and can be a good indicator of the quality of teaching and learning that is happening.