



Porthcawl Comprehensive School

UCAS Guide for Parents

The University and Colleges Application System. (UCAS)

UCAS is the central system through which all student applications are made to UK universities. Their website is a particularly useful resource for students and parents. (www.ucas.com/parents)

How the application process works

- Students decide on their degree course /s and preferred universities.
- They complete an on-line UCAS application, including their 'Personal Statement'.
- The school completes and sends the application by completing a reference which includes the student's predicted grades and submits the form electronically to UCAS.
- Universities then make conditional offers of places to students, usually from October onwards.
- UCAS Extra - Whilst students are able to make 5 choices on their initial application, there is a facility titled 'UCAS Extra' which opens in February 2016. This allows students who have either been rejected from all of their options or who have rejected all of their choices to make further applications at the end of the cycle. Please be aware that students can opt to use this process without discussion or being authorised by the school. UCAS Extra can act as a useful 'insurance' for some students.

The personal statement

The personal statement is an extremely important component of the application. This is because it is the student's opportunity to explain to a university admissions' tutor why they would be a good candidate for their choice of degree course. It is possible that a well-written and convincing personal statement could result in a student being made a better 'offer' than another student. Conversely, an unconvincing statement could result in a student not receiving an offer at all.

Whilst the school works very hard to support students in writing their personal statements, ultimately, it is the student's responsibility to complete this. The final draft of the personal statement should be completed and submitted by mid-October (see *Important Dates* list). If applying for medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or Oxford or Cambridge the personal statements can be completed and submitted by the end of the Summer term or at the start of the Autumn term at the very latest.

UCAS references

The UCAS reference is the school's opportunity to 'sell' the student to their chosen universities. At Porthcawl we aim to be as positive and constructive as possible and we will work with students to ensure that we have all information to hand that could support their application. The references are written by the students' subject teachers and Form Tutors and include information on their performance in each subject. Mrs Williams finalises the references and these are checked through by Mr Slade before final submission. ***Please note this process may take several weeks to complete before the application can be forwarded to UCAS because of the checks that are made to ensure the best quality reference is provided.***

Predicted grades

Students' predicted grades are another important part of their application. As a school, we encourage all staff to adopt a positive and optimistic approach to agreeing grade predictions that takes into account a students' potential development during the final year of their course.

Grade predictions are discussed with students and are based on the Uniform Mark Scores that students have achieved in previous exams and take into account any potential improvement through resit exams.

It is also important that students use their predicted grades as a basis for choosing their university and courses. Grade requirements vary widely between universities and whilst we encourage students to be aspirational in their choices, it is also important that they are realistic about their likelihood of achieving grades that will secure a place on a course at their desired university.

Communicating with parents during the process

Please note that whilst we are happy to discuss any aspect of a student's application during the process, we are unable to keep parents informed about the detail of every application on an on-going basis. We advise, therefore, that parents discuss their son or daughter's application status with them on a regular basis.

It is also important to note that UCAS regard applications as confidential between themselves and students and will not usually discuss them with parents unless they have been nominated as point of contact.

Choosing universities and courses

Clearly, students' choices of courses and universities will be influenced by an enormous range of factors and we will offer support and guidance at each stage of the process. We keep a full set of UK university prospectuses in the sixth form study room, but it is worth noting that most universities' prospectuses are available on their websites. The on-line versions are also likely to be the most up to date.

We also recommend that students visit a number of universities during the summer term as part of the process of making their decision about where to study. It is worth noting that many universities now offer Saturday open days and encourage parents to attend with their sons or daughters. The full list of university open days can be found at:

www.ucas.com/students/choosingcourses/choosinguni/opendays

How the school supports students in completing their UCAS application

The remainder of the summer term and the early stages of the autumn term are devoted to working with students in a wide range of ways. Form tutors are actively involved in discussions with their students about their choices; Debz Silk, our Careers Advisor, is on hand to interview pupils; Mrs Williams tracks every applicant's progress and is always available for advice and discussion. Time is given during tutor periods in September/early October for work on the UCAS application and Personal Statements.

Finally...

We are very proud of the achievements of our students in gaining the right university places for them, and we do our very best to support their applications. We look forward to helping this year's cohort to achieve their goals.

The Sixth Form team

KEY UCAS DATES 2016-17

(Please note school deadlines/dates are in BOLD)

1 st September 2016	Opening Date for receiving applications
30th September 2016	Closing dates for early applicants (Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science) to Pay/Send UCAS form to school
1 st October 2016	Closing date for applications for music conservatoires through CUKAS
15 th October 2016	Closing date for applications to Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science
25th November 2016	Final Pay/Send deadline for applicants
15 th January 2017	Advisory closing date for UCAS applications from inside UK
15th February 2017	Student Finance Evening for Parents
February 2017	Start of UCAS Extra (process of reapplying if all offers rejected or turned down)
	STUDENT FINANCE WALES GOES LIVE
May 2017	Final date for receiving offers/rejections from Universities (provided application was submitted by 15 January)
	Final date for accepting/declining offers –to be confirmed (provided application submitted by 15 January)
July 2017	Last date for referrals through UCAS Extra
August 2017	AS and A2 Results and start of Clearing (to be confirmed)
September 2017	Last date for Clearing applications (to be confirmed)