



**EF ACADEMY**

International  
Boarding Schools

# OXFORD

## UNIVERSITY GUIDANCE HANDBOOK 2020-21

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF UNIVERSITY GUIDANCE

On behalf of the University Guidance team I would like to welcome you to EF Academy Oxford. A key aim of the school is to provide you with the education and skills that will prepare you to make successful applications to leading universities in the UK and other countries. Working hard to get the best grades possible in your A-Level or IB Diploma subjects is essential to university success, but you should also take advantage of as many opportunities as possible in Oxford to get involved in activities outside lessons which will develop your knowledge and profile.

This University Guidance handbook complements your course handbooks for A-Level or IB Diploma. This handbook is intended to give you as much advice and support as possible to make the most informed and ultimately successful decisions that you can in order to get to the best universities for you. The book is full of advice – but be warned that advice is only useful if it is followed. You will find that there is something you can do every month, starting from your very first month with us, to create the best university application possible.

If you have any questions or comments please contact any member of the team, we are always happy to help. All of the university guidance activities in the coming year are being conducted in accordance with EF Academy’s “Safe Learning Promise” and health and safety policies which have been produced in accordance with the advice to deal with COVID-19. What this means in practice is that you will always be able to access advice via online communications, even if you are not resident in Oxford (or are present but isolating as a medical precaution); it means that live meetings will take place in accordance with distancing and protective equipment guidelines; and finally, it means that pathways activities or trips will also need to take place in accordance with the safety and distancing rules which have been

put in place to ensure the safety of you and all participants. Despite these circumstances, we will still be able to make full university guidance provision and no students will miss out because of the current circumstances.

We look forward to working with you and wish you all the best for your time at EF Academy Oxford.

**Dr Mark Zumbuhl**  
**UK Director of University Guidance**

## 1.0 WHAT IS UNIVERSITY GUIDANCE?

EF Academy Oxford aims to provide you with a superior education, exciting opportunities for extra-curricular activities, and a truly international experience which will help you to be a confident and successful global citizen. Many students in high school now will in 10-30 years' time be working in jobs that do not even exist yet, such is the pace of innovation and technological change in the workplace. The best preparation for a wide range of future careers is a strong university education, and EF Academy wishes to give you the best support possible in planning and preparing for university.

The higher education field has expanded massively in the last twenty years and so one of the biggest challenges for you is to navigate the choice that is available. There are more than 120 universities in the UK alone, offering around 38000 degrees and degree combinations. When you start to look in other countries, you will find that there are more than 4000 universities in Europe, more than 2000 four-year colleges in the USA and many more excellent institutions on all continents. This adds up to a lot of choice. Somewhere out there is the perfect institution and course for you, and it is very important for you to do the research, with the support of the University Guidance (UG) team to find the places that will be a good fit for you.

## 2.0 PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

All academic programmes at EF Academy Oxford are built around the "Pathways to Success". A Pathway is your individual route to gaining an excellent diploma, a range of skills and admission to great universities.

Pathways incorporate academic and extra-curricular activities which will help you to develop your knowledge and prepare for future careers. As part of the admissions process, the Course Co-ordinator and Director of University Guidance have looked at your interests, abilities and subject choices and have made a recommendation as to which Pathway is most appropriate for you. As you progress in your studies, your Tutor and other members of staff will work with

you to ensure that your Pathway is providing the best support for you to succeed. As part of the process you will have received a letter outlining the different Pathways and giving examples of some of the activities available. In the appendix at the back of this handbook is a list of activities which took place in the 2018-2019 academic year and examples of a typical week in school.

Your time at EF Academy Oxford will be limited – the A-Level and IB Diploma programmes last for less than two years – so the Pathways will enable you to focus on activities which are most relevant to your interests and university ambitions. Nonetheless, we believe in the value of a broad education for all students, so nearly all Pathways activities are open to all students. For example, even if you are mainly interested in Business, you are more than welcome to join the Engineering Club or come to a lunchtime masterclass in Chemistry; similarly, even if your ambition is to study medicine and become a doctor, you can join the Friends of Philosophy or take part in Model United Nations. The main limit to what you do will be your skill in organizing and planning your own time around your studies and other interests.

Some of you will still be uncertain of what you want to do in the future. This is not a problem, since combinations of A-Level or IB Diploma subjects will provide an excellent foundation for further study and will give you multiple options at university. By trying out different Pathways Activities you will find out what it is you are really interested in and this will help you refine your plans for the future.

Pathway	Typical Subject Combinations for Pathway (A-Level / IB HL)	Examples of In-School Activities and Support	Examples of other Pathway Activities	Elements of University & Careers Support	Examples of actual University Offers given to EF Academy Oxford Students
<b>Science, Technology &amp; Engineering</b>	Science: At least 2 sciences + Mathematics or a 3rd science  Engineering: Mathematics, Physics + one other science  Computer Science: Mathematics; Physics recommended	Field trips, e.g. to Harwell Nuclear Research Facility  Organic Chemistry experiments at Oxford University	Talks @ Oxford Mathematical Institute  Opportunities for internships @ Oxford University science departments  Summer projects e.g. building	Engineers, Energy Industry & Environmental consultants @ school careers fair  Opportunities for UK industry internships	A*A*A*/41 Points: Engineering @ Cambridge University, Oxford University  AAB/35 Points: Computer

	Further Mathematics recommended for very able students	Engineering Club, Maths Club	robot arm, network infrastructure		Science @ King's College London  ABC/30 Points: Astrophysics @ Kent University
<b>Bio-medical Sciences</b>	Medicine: Chemistry + Biology  Pharmacy: Chemistry. Biology is optional but recommended  Biomedical Engineering: Maths, Physics, Biology	BMAT test preparation classes  Field trips, visiting speakers e.g. neuroscience  Masterclasses, e.g. Cochrane Evidence-Based Medicine	Bioscience & Medicine Talks @ Oxford University, e.g. on the pharmaceutical industry  Health & Care experience, e.g. KEEN Charity, John Radcliffe Hospital	BMAT Essay Preparation  Medicine, Veterinary Science & Pharmacy interview practice	A*AA/38 Points: Medicine @ Imperial College Biochemistry @ Oxford  ABC/36 Points: Cancer Immunology @ Bristol University  BBC/30 Points: Biomedical Sciences @ Keele University
<b>Business, Finance &amp; Management</b>	Business: Economics, Business  Accounting & Finance: Mathematics; Economics recommended  Management: Mathematics; Business	Departmental field trips, e.g. to MINI, Coca-Cola  Student Investor Challenge  Extended	Talks @ Said Business School  Social Enterprise  Masterclasses @ Hult International Business School	EF Academy International Internship Scheme  C.V./Résumé builder  Interview	AAA/38 Points: Management @ Warwick University  ABB/34 Points: Business Management

	and/or Economics recommended	Essay option and tutoring for A- Level Students		Practice	@ Edinburgh University  BCC/28 points: Global Management @ Coventry University
<b>International Relations, Politics, Law, Economics</b>	Economics: Mathematics, Economics  Law: Any combination of subjects  International Relations/Politics: A-Level students should take at least 1 essay-based subject. IB students: History and/or Philosophy	Houses of Parliament  Oxford Magistrates Court  Model United Nations, Debate Club	Global Leadership Summit  Talks @ Oxford University, e.g. UN Secretary General	Support classes to prepare for TSA and LNAT tests  Interview Practice	A*AA/38 Points: Law @ University College London  ABB/31 Points: Economics & Politics @ Newcastle University  BCC / 28 Points: Politics & International Relations @ Leicester University
<b>Arts, Media &amp; Cultural Studies</b>	Media/Communication, Literature: At least 1 essay-based subject  Architecture: Students are recommended to take at least 1 of Mathematics and/or Physics  For all creative arts degrees (e.g.: fine art, design, fashion), the portfolio is most important	Creative Writing Contest  Visual Arts Club for portfolio development  Art for Change	Theatre trips to Oxford, London and elsewhere  Oxford Museums and Galleries: Ashmolean, Natural History, Pitt Rivers; visits to London galleries & museums, etc.	HAT, ELAT test and essay preparation  Interview & Portfolio Presentation Practice	A*AA/38 Points: Architecture @ University College London  ABB/34 Points: History of Art @ Courtauld Institute, London

					CCC/26 Points & Portfolio: Fine Art @ University of the Arts, London
<b>Students applying to North America*</b>	See subject Pathways above; top US/Canadian universities like to see students taking the most challenging courses available to them  Some US universities will require SAT subject tests: additional help available from subject teachers	In addition to following one of the above pathways, US applicants undertake:  Assembly presentations  Opportunities for peer support/mentoring in classes	Additional service volunteering, e.g. summer school leadership  Support for creativity and entrepreneurship, .e.g. video editing charity	Preparation for CommonApp and supplementary essays  ACT/SAT test preparation (ACT test can be taken in-school)  Practice for interviews with alumni (standard for Ivy league schools)	UC Berkeley UCLA Chicago University University of Pennsylvania New York University Haverford College  University of Toronto McGill University University of British Columbia
<b>Students applying to elite universities*</b>	Additional preparation for universities which have additional entrance examinations and interviews.  Additional project qualifications available for strong students	Extension masterclasses and reading in subjects Extra support for school work submitted in support of application.	Internship opportunities to help university research students  Prep for Cambridge/Oxford entrance tests	Additional discussion workshops to build student confidence in communicating ideas  Interview practice with subject teachers and UG team	Cambridge, Oxford, Imperial and other top universities; see example offers in table above

\*These pathways are *in addition to* those related to specific subjects or programs. These options are for students specifically aiming at applying to elite universities such as Oxford or Cambridge, or to North American universities (especially those in the USA which require standardized aptitude tests).

### 3.0 SUBJECT CHOICES

As part of the admissions process the A-Level and IB Diploma Co-ordinators will have discussed with you the best options for your subject choices. It is important to note that many university degrees do not have mandatory pre-requisites for A-Level subjects or IB Diploma Higher Level subjects. For example, no UK universities insist on you having studied Business in order to start a degree in Business. Having said that, of course it will be easier to make the transition to university if you already have a background in the relevant subjects.

Certain university degrees do have mandatory requirements in terms of high school subjects. These tend to be the more technical disciplines: Science, Mathematics-based degrees (such as Economics or Computer Science), Engineering, and Medicine. If you are interested in studying these degrees at university, you must choose the appropriate subjects at A-Level/IB Diploma.

DEGREE	PREREQUISITE A-LEVEL / IB HIGHER LEVEL SUBJECT(S)
Accounting	Mathematics
Architecture	Often at least one of Physics, Mathematics; an art/design portfolio also required
Biology	Biology
Chemistry	Chemistry
Computer Science	Mathematics
Dentistry	Chemistry plus at least one other subject from Biology, Physics and Mathematics (Biology is preferred)
Economics	Mathematics
Engineering	Physics and Mathematics (and another science if relevant, e.g. Chemistry for Chemical Engineering)
History	History
Law	No specific subjects; a mixture of science and humanities subjects can be very helpful
Mathematics	Mathematics and Further Mathematics
Medicine	Chemistry plus at least one other subject from Biology, Physics and Mathematics (Biology is preferred)
Physics	Physics and Mathematics
Psychology	Some Psychology degrees require Mathematics and/or another science



International Relations/Politics	No specific requirements, but at least one essay-based subject is normally preferred
Management/Business Studies	No specific requirements (some courses at the higher-ranked universities do require Mathematics)
Other Art/Design subjects	A strong portfolio is normally required, but no specific school subjects are needed

For IB students, it is also recommended to choose an Extended Essay topic which is directly relevant to your chosen degree course.

A very good document to read with regard to subject choices is on the Russell Group website (<http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/>) entitled 'Informed Choices' which gives advice on this topic. The Russell Group is a group of some of the highest-ranked UK universities.

#### 4.0 THE UNIVERSITY GUIDANCE PROCESS

Preparing for university is a continuous process which starts in your first term at EF Academy. You cannot leave everything until the second year or the last minute; even if you are not sure of your plans when you start in school, learning about your options and researching courses and universities online can be done at any time and will help you make better decisions.

Here is a general outline of the UG process at school:

YEAR 1
<p><i>Term 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check subject selection and Pathway</li> <li>• Introduction to UCAS, Bridge-U and other university platforms</li> <li>• Attend EF University Fair in London &amp; university visit</li> <li>• (Optional) Attend USA College Day in London</li> <li>• Speak to member of UG team for advice</li> <li>• Start participating in Pathways activities</li> <li>• Receive initial Pathways Plan with suggested next steps</li> </ul> <p><i>Term 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start preparing for aptitude / standardized tests if needed</li> <li>• Start building shortlist of universities</li> <li>• Visit more universities</li> <li>• Continue with Pathways activities to develop skills and experience</li> <li>• Plan summer internships / work experience</li> </ul>

### *Term 3*

- Introduction to Personal Statement process; start writing statements / application essays
- Refine university shortlist in light of academic progress
- Take USA standardized tests for first time if required
- Register on UCAS/CommonApp/other application systems as required
- Continue with Pathways activities to develop skills and experience

### *Summer Vacation*

- Take part in internships / summer schools / other experience as required

## **YEAR 2**

### *Term 1*

- Finish writing Personal Statements / Application Essays
- Teachers issue predicted grades
- Submit university applications
- Sit medicine/Oxbridge aptitude tests if required
- Sit USA standardized tests if required
- University interviews if invited

## **4.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF YEAR 1**

You will see from the above table that the vast majority of preparation for a successful university application takes place in the first year of your course. This is for several reasons:

### **GRADES**

Universities in the UK, USA, Canada, The Netherlands and Australia require schools to provide predicted final grades up to 11 months before you actually receive your final results. For details of the school's predicted grades policy, please see the appendix to this handbook.

Teachers will get a good idea of your predicted grades from your Year 1 performance in assignments and examinations.

For applications to the USA and Canada, Year 1 is even more important. A North American college will look very closely at your grades for Year 1 (which will be submitted on your academic transcript) as an indicator of your academic ability and your commitment to your studies.

Therefore, it is vital that you work as hard as possible from the beginning of year 1, in order that your termly grades and predicted grades are as strong as possible.

### **PATHWAYS**

Making the most of the opportunities provided in the Pathways to Success will help to make your university application stand out. Every week, you will be notified of activities and support your Pathway(s) and participating in these will give you a greater chance of success, because you will have more interesting things to talk about in your Personal Statement / Application Essays. You do not need to take part in everything – indeed, there will not be enough time for you to possibly do everything – but by getting involved in clubs, going to relevant talks, and doing other activities which are connected with the degree to which you are applying, you can make yourself stand out from the other candidates.

### ***APTITUDE TESTS***

Students applying for Medicine in the UK, or for courses at certain elite universities (mainly Oxford and Cambridge) will need to take special aptitude tests in addition to their IB Diploma or A-Levels. The reason for this is that so many students apply to those courses who are all predicted to achieve very high grades, so the universities need extra filters in order to separate truly exceptional candidates from those who are just very good. In the past, the students who have done the most preparation and practice for these tests are the ones who have scored highest and then been invited to interviews. Students applying to the USA are strongly recommended to take standardized tests (either ACT or SAT), since a student accepted after taking these tests will not have the pressure of needing to achieve specific final grades in A-Level/IB Diploma. Again, the students who have done best in these tests are the ones who did the most preparation in Year 1. It is not feasible to leave everything until the autumn of Year 2. There are support classes and drop-in sessions to help students prepare for all these tests, so students should take advantage of these opportunities.

### ***PROGRESS IN A-LEVELS AND THE IB DIPLOMA***

These courses are the culmination of a lot of work. Year 1 work is preparation either for more difficult topics in Year 2 in both IB Diploma and A-Level. For the IB, work in Year 1 is also preparation for internal assessments to be completed in Year 2, while as much as possible of the Extended Essay should be completed at the end of Year 1 and during the summer vacation. Students who decide only to work hard in Year 2 never achieve as high an overall score as they are capable of and this has a direct impact on your predicted grades and therefore the universities to which you can realistically apply.

## **4.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF PATHWAYS AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES TO UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS**

Pathways, extracurricular activities and the CAS programme have many purposes, the most important of which is:

### **“EDUCATION OF THE WHOLE PERSON”**

The IB Diploma and A-levels are very demanding courses. In order to maximise your reward for all your hard work in the classroom, it is important to apply your skills and knowledge in situations in the real world. This is something that universities want to know about. The

extracurricular activities exist to give you the opportunity to do this.

**SECONDARY OBJECTIVES ARE:**

“Education beyond the classroom and examination hall”

“Promotion of international understanding”

“Encouragement of new skills and interests”

“Promotion of more informed and understanding attitudes”

“Counterbalance to academic absorption”

In addition, from the point of view of university applications, extracurricular and CAS activities can be very useful when composing the Personal Statement. Both can be a form of relevant experience which can be used to demonstrate enthusiasm, knowledge, practical skills and scholastic aptitude in a certain academic field. If the experience is relevant it could help you get into university. University admissions tutors are looking for students who can demonstrate a genuine passion and enthusiasm for their subject. Many students can get the grades required by a university, so in order to stand out from the rest you need to demonstrate that you have a genuine desire to follow that subject. If you wish to apply for engineering, for example, if you have been in the engineering club in school, gone to some relevant lectures in Oxford and got good work experience in the summer, that will help to convince the admissions tutors at university that you are the right kind of candidate.

***Some examples of skills demonstrated by different activities:***

Business acumen, entrepreneurship (student investor challenge, yearbook)

Enthusiasm for subject outside the classroom (attending a masterclass or lecture, or reading a non-syllabus book)

Service to the community (teaching someone, charity activities)

Organisation (planning an activity such as Hispanic Day, the school Ball or the MUN conference)

Communication (being in charge of a sports team, taking part in an assembly debate)

Creativity (Art for Change, writing and performing a theatre piece, music)

Motivation (doing a relevant course in your own time – fashion or art for example).

### **4.3 CAREERS GUIDANCE OVERVIEW**

Some students come to EF Academy with a very clear future plan and are fairly certain about what kind of work they would like to do in the future and what university degree is needed to get them there. On the other hand, many students are unsure of what they would like to study at university or what they wish to do in the long-term. If you find yourself in this situation do not worry, it is perfectly normal. Sometimes thinking about the degree you would like to study at university can help you decide what subjects to study at EF Academy Oxford. As a general rule, if you choose to study mathematics with a science and a natural science this is a subject combination which will allow you to apply for most degree courses you can think of (with the exception of medicine and some engineering courses).

However, if you are still unsure about your future then doing some research into careers can

also be a useful way to think about choices you will need to make now. In school, you will have access to various resources as well as the advice of the university guidance team. We have a number of visiting speakers through the year who can talk about different kinds of careers (e.g. manager, doctor, engineer, forensic scientist, architect, physicist) and other opportunities to find out about your future options. The most important thing is to make sure you develop a broad range of knowledge and skills so you can adapt to different kinds of jobs. The days when people would stay in a single job for life ended with the twentieth century and modern employers are looking for people who are globally-adaptable, good communicators, problem-solvers and able to take on a range of tasks.

The following websites have useful information on different careers and routes into them:

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice>

<https://www.ucas.com/careers-advice>

When considering a particular job or career, it is important to consider:

- What happens within a job on a day-to-day basis?
- What qualifications are required to access a particular job or career?
- What skills are required for a particular job?
- What personality traits are required for a particular job?
- What type of salary can you expect from a certain job?

These are all criteria on which people base their career decisions. This is also very useful to help strengthen your personal statement for university if you know which skills and personal characteristics a university admissions tutor might be expecting to read about.

#### 4.4 UNIVERSITY GUIDANCE: DETAILED TIMELINE

As you progress through your course, we keep track of university preparation in several stages:

EF ACADEMY OXFORD YEAR 1	
MONTH	ACTIVITY
September	Talk with teachers and UG team for any further advice on subjects. Make sure that your Pathway reflects your university ambitions. The UGC will also give a presentation on subject choices and the whole UG process. In the first term a member of the UG Team will meet with you one-to-one to discuss your plans. You will also start using Bridge-U.
October	Go to EF University Fair in London and speak to a range of universities about courses and funding. Visit a London university as well.
November	Complete follow-up university research after the EF university fair.

January	<p>Talk to the UGC about: preparation for medicine, preparation for an Oxbridge application, preparation for a US application and work experience during the summer break.</p> <p>Start preparation for ACT/SAT if needed.</p> <p>Start preparation for Oxford/Cambridge and other UK University admissions tests, e.g. BMAT for medicine.</p> <p>Register for SAT subject tests or the ACT (<a href="http://www.act.org">www.act.org</a>) in May and/or June if you intend to apply to the USA (<a href="http://www.collegeboard.com">www.collegeboard.com</a>) and begin preparation.</p>
February	<p>IB students should try to make good progress with the extended essay so they can include it in their personal statement.</p> <p>Based on regular on-track assessments in school so far, use the grades as a guide to choosing universities with the UGC.</p> <p>Check if you need an IELTS or any other type of test in addition to your studies at EF Academy Oxford with EF Academy's dedicated ESL teachers. Register for an IELTS test if you need to.</p>
March	<p>Visits to more universities take place in the Spring and Summer terms.</p> <p>Deadline to apply for work experience in a hospital in Oxford (for those interested in medicine).</p>
April	<p>Start to finalise degree course choices and start writing down ideas for the personal statement.</p> <p>The EF Academy Internship scheme normally opens for applications at this time.</p>
May	<p>In-school sessions to get you registered on the UCAS apply system or to other application systems if needed. Continue work on personal statement.</p> <p>Make sure you ask two of your teachers to act as subject references if you are applying to the USA.</p> <p>Sit SAT I or II tests if required</p>
June	<p>Have shortlist of university choices; these can be changed after summer in light of your experiences.</p> <p>EF Academy will have completed a first draft of your university reference by this point.</p> <p>Sit SAT II subject tests if required or ACT.</p>

### SUMMER BREAK

Register for UK university aptitude tests (BMAT, UKCAT, LNAT) if required.

Register for ACT/SAT for October/November if needed.
If you are applying to Oxford, Cambridge or similar UK universities, register and study for any required pre-application test such as TSA (Economics & Management or Philosophy, Politics & Economics and for engineering at Cambridge) or PAT (Physics).
Read outside your subject. Use the Oxford University reading list as a guide ( <a href="http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate_courses/courses/suggested_reading.html">http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate_courses/courses/suggested_reading.html</a> )
Read about what is happening in your chosen subject area in the news.
Undertake internships or work experience.

EF ACADEMY OXFORD YEAR 2	
MONTH	ACTIVITY
September	Refine university and degree choices. Latest deadline to register for UKCAT, BMAT and LNAT.
October	Oxford, Cambridge and Medicine applications should be ready around October 1st. Complete UCAS form online and send for those applying by the 15 <sup>th</sup> (Oxbridge + Medicine/Vet Medicine/Dentistry) Take ACT/SAT examination again if required. Start practice for interviews if required.
November	November 1st is the early application deadline for the USA.
December	Early December is the EF Academy Oxford internal deadline for all other UCAS applications.
January	January 1st is the application deadline for many US colleges. January 15th is the official UCAS deadline for all UK applications. Application deadline for some Canadian universities.
February	Mock examinations for Year 2 students.
May	Early May is the UCAS deadline for replying to offers if you received all your offers by March 31st.  IB examinations start in late April and continue through to mid-May.
June	Early June is the final deadline for replying to UCAS offers received after March 31st.  A-Level examinations start in late May and continue through to late June.
July	IB Diploma results
August	A-Level results
September/October	Start at university

## 4.5 CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY

Once you have decided on the course you would like to follow this may narrow down your choice of university. Most students have an idea of the location they want to be in. Once you have a shortlist you will need to find more information to help you narrow down the search.

Visit the universities if you can or look in their prospectuses. Talk to your teachers, they may have an idea about which universities are particularly good for specific subjects.

In the UK and most European countries, and also to some extent in Australia and Canada, you enter a university primarily to study a particular subject (major). In the USA things are a bit different; American universities often do not require you to declare a particular major when you enrol, as the first couple of years give you a broad-based and general education before you specialise in a particular area.

You should select your combination of universities and courses carefully. In particular, when applying to UK universities you will need to apply for courses that are relatively similar to each other – business and economics, say, or history and politics. It is unwise to apply for some degrees in management and other in zoology because the subjects are too different and the application will not allow you to focus on both areas.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

- Is it a campus or non-campus university?
- Are the transport links good?
- What type of location do you prefer - by the sea, in a rural area, in a city?
- What is the reputation of the university?
- What accommodation do they offer students?
- How good are the social and sporting facilities?
- What student support is available (for example medical, financial, disability support)?
- What kinds of grades do they typically ask for?
- Is financial aid or scholarships available?
- What are the employment rates for graduates of that university?

## 4.6 MAKING USE OF THE BRIDGE-U PLATFORM

EF Academy Oxford has started subscribing to the Bridge-U system to support your university research and applications. You will receive your account login and an induction to the system in the first term. Bridge-U is no substitute for speaking to the University Guidance team but it will allow you to do research any time you like.

When you first log in to the system it will ask you a number of questions about what subjects you are interested in, what country you would like to study in, what kind of university environment you prefer, and other pieces of information. You will have the opportunity to put in your school grades. Based on this information it will suggest a number of universities and courses for you. You can shortlist some of these, reject them, manually add your own courses



and more.

Using Bridge-U should not be a one-off exercise; it is a process whereby you can update your information and grades and let the system help you to refine your university choices. We suggest that once you have put in your initial “ideal” grades and seen what places it suggests, you then update with your recent Assessment Grades once per term to see how your progress may influence what universities are realistic destinations for you. If you find that a particular university you are interested in wants A grades and you are mainly getting Bs, then you know you have to work with your academic Tutor and teachers to find out how to improve. Members of the UG team can also set you specific tasks to perform in the system. Because it is web-based you can access it from your phone or anywhere else.

### ***OTHER ELEMENTS OF BRIDGE-U***

As the year progresses we will be using other features of Bridge-U to help prepare you for university:

#### **Strategy Builder**

You can manually enter activities you have done (or copy them from the ManageBac system, since Bridge-U syncs to ManageBac) in order to keep a record of your experiences, e.g. internships, visits to an engineering plant, a charity project, an interesting lecture you went to at Oxford University, and anything else you wish to list or write a reflection about. Bridge-U will look at the courses you shortlist and suggest particular kinds of skills you need to develop or include in your personal statement based on what you have done so far. This will enable you to assemble materials for the written parts of your university applications.

#### **Writing Builder**

Bridge-U has a facility for you to draft your personal statement/application essay. It is saved live in real-time and by being in Bridge-U, teachers can give you feedback on your personal statement at any time from any location where the internet is accessible. In a separate part of the system, your teachers will use Bridge-U to write your university references. Both of these processes start in Term 3 of Year 1, and you will finish writing your applications in Term 1 of Year 2. More information on this process is provided below.

As with most online systems, people get from Bridge-U what they put into it. It can be very helpful, but of course some students will use it more than others. Consider it to be another useful tool in the range of resources which are provided to you.

## **5.0 APPLYING TO UNIVERSITIES IN THE UK**

### **5.1 APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

All university applications are sent through one central organisation: UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service), [wwwucas.com](http://wwwucas.com). There are some private universities which you can apply to separately.

- You can apply to a maximum of five universities online through UCAS. You can apply to fewer if you wish.
- For: Dentistry, Medicine and Veterinary Medicine and all applications to Oxford and Cambridge Universities you must apply by October 15th of Year 2 but your application should be ready by October 1st.
- For all other universities you must submit your application by January 15th of Year 2 but you should have it ready by the end of November so the school can send it before the Christmas holiday.
- **You can only apply to one of Oxford or Cambridge, you cannot apply to both.**
- **Oxford and Cambridge courses normally require an entrance test, examples include:**  
LNAT (Law)  
BMAT (Medicine)  
HAT (History)  
TSA (social science courses apart from History)  
MAT (Mathematics and Computer Science).
- Each aptitude test can only be taken once per year. For example, if you take the UKCAT, the score you get is the only one which can be used in an application that year, even though there are multiple dates on which you could take the UKCAT.
- Most courses at most UK universities *do not* require any special test.
- The most important part of the UCAS application is the Personal Statement, which is an essay outlining your motivation for the course you want to study and activities which you have done which are relevant or demonstrate qualities/skills which are relevant to your chosen degree course.
- Some universities may invite you to interview as part of the application process. This is mostly Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial (all courses), Medicine/Veterinary Medicine/Dentistry/Pharmacy, but also certain courses at other universities. The school will provide plenty of interview practice with different members of staff and occasionally experts from outside school. Note that most courses at most universities will *not* need an interview.
- If you are applying for a creative arts course (such as architecture, fine art, design, animation) you will need to provide a portfolio of your work. Often this can be uploaded online. Sometimes the institution will invite you to a “portfolio day” where they will look at your work and perhaps interview you – again, we will help you to practise for this.
- EF Academy Oxford also has to write a reference for you. A student’s subject teachers are contacted to obtain a predicted grade, to ask about the student’s academic strength

and their personal qualities. This information is then summarised in the school reference which is submitted online.

- Individual predicted grades are given to students at the beginning of Year 2 to help students make informed decisions about the choice of universities. Predicted grades at the beginning of Year 2 are not necessarily final and can either improve or worsen depending on student performance and the On-Track Grades / Assessment Grades throughout both years.
- The advantage of submitting your application as early as possible is that you as a student demonstrate good time management skills, motivation and dedication which puts your application in a positive light. It also means that a university admissions officer will have more time to consider your application because most university applications are submitted in late December and January.

## 5.2 COST

UCAS application: £25 GBP. You will need a debit card or a credit card to pay this fee online.  
Tuition fee: If you have an EU passport and have been mainly resident in the EU for the last 3 years, the fees have been up to £9250 GBP per year but future fees are uncertain until the final deal between the UK and EU is negotiated. If you have a non-EU passport, or if you are a UK/EU citizen but you have been mostly living outside the EU/EEA for the last three years, the average is about £15 000 GBP; science courses tend to be more expensive and humanities courses less expensive, with medicine being most expensive of all. These arrangements may change in future but not for a couple of years at least.

Living expenses (accommodation, food, books, going out, bills if you share a private house): This varies according to the type of accommodation that you take (you can share a room, choose to have an ensuite bathroom and have meals included if you wish). In London, approximately £1000+ per month, outside London £800+ per month.

Students with an EU passport who apply to a Scottish university and obtain a place may be exempt from tuition fees until the UK/EU transition period expires.

## 5.3 UCAS REGISTRATION

UCAS opens for registration in May for the following academic year (for example, applications for university courses starting in September 2022 will be open from May 2021). We will run dedicated workshops in school during May to get you registered on UCAS and make sure you understand all elements of the application process.

## 5.4 CHOOSING A COURSE

There are over 38,000 courses listed in the UCAS directory, offered at 300 institutions. Choosing a course is a difficult decision - Here are some things to think about when making your decision:

- Think about what you enjoy and do well both at school and outside.
- Write down a list of jobs you would like to do and why.
- Discuss your options with your teachers, UG team, family and friends.
- Whatever your interests, it is essential that you do lots of research.

### **Information to help you:**

UCAS directory and the UCAS website

BridgeU

EF University Fair in London in October/November

University websites, prospectuses and course leaflets.

Use the league tables to give you an idea of what courses there are and how highly rated they are.

Visit universities on Open Days where possible.

Call or email the Admissions Tutors to find out about course structure.

### **Points to Consider:**

How long is the course?

How is the course assessed? 100% examinations or are there projects as well?

How is the course taught? What is the ratio of formal lectures and seminars to independent study?

Is there a final year project / dissertation?

Are there any opportunities to do a work placement or to study abroad?

Can you do a combined degree with modules from different subject areas?

What are the job prospects?

What are the entry requirements? Are you studying the correct subjects? Are you likely to meet the entry requirements?

A subject such as Engineering has many different branches within it. Ask your teachers about these different areas. The same applies to Business Management, Medicine, Law, Politics and International Relations.

Some subjects such as Law and Medicine are incredibly popular and may get as many as 10-20 applications for every place available on the course. Consequently, the universities set high entrance requirements to get on the course. For Law, the minimum you may find is 34 points or ABB. Can you find a course which is maybe similar but less popular? For example a joint honours degree in Law and Management? Less well known, less applicants, lower points/grade requirement but still an excellent degree.

Is there a certain university, which has a good reputation for a particular degree? It may be worth looking at some of the different rankings and league tables of universities: see section 10 below.

## **5.5 SAMPLE UK UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS**

This table demonstrates offers from some of the most demanding universities for some of the most popular courses that students apply for. It also demonstrates that if students are willing to combine courses with another discipline then they may be able to find a course at a very good university with a lower offer than you would normally expect. The final two universities are newer universities but with rapidly improving reputations having made multi-million pound investments in facilities.

UNIVERSITY	COURSE	IBDP POINTS / A-LEVEL GRADES REQUIRED
Oxford / Cambridge	All	38-42 with 7,6,6 or 7,7,6 at HL; A*A*A – A*AA
ol of Economics	Economics	38 with a 6 or 7 in Maths HL; A*AA-AAA
Kings College London	Medicine	35 with 6, 6, 6 in all HL subjects; A*AA-AAB
Warwick	Management	38; A*AA
Bristol	Dentistry	36-37 with 6, 6, 6 in all HL subjects; A*AA-AAA
Manchester	Mechanical Engineering	35 with 5/6 in Maths and Physics HL; AAA-AAB
Durham	English Literature	38 with a 7 in English A1 HL; A*AA-AAA
University of East Anglia	English Literature	34 with a 6 in English A1 HL; ABB
University of Liverpool	Genetics	33 points with 6 in Biology HL; ABB-BBB
University of St Andrews, Scotland	History	36-38 with 6 in History HL; A*AA-AAB
Nottingham	History	36 with 6 in History HL; AAA-AAB
UCL	History and Philosophy of Science	34-36; AAA-AAB
Lancaster University	History and International Relations	35; AAA-ABB
University College London	Law	39; A*AA
Exeter University	Law with European Study	36-34; AAA-ABB
Oxford Brookes University	International Business Management	33; BBB
Brunel University	International Business	33; BBB

## 5.6 UCAS TARIFF

What is the UCAS tariff? This is a method of converting your qualifications into one points

system so that universities can evaluate applications and make conditional offers.

Each qualification is worth a number of points. All grades and qualifications are added together to give a total tariff point score. A university may make you an offer based on obtaining a minimum tariff points score or they may ask for specific grades in a subject. Generally you will find that the newer universities express offers in terms of tariff points, while the older ones use A-Level grades/IB points scores. It makes no difference from the point of view of what you need to achieve in school.

UCAS TARIFF	
IB POINTS FOR EACH HL SUBJECT / A-LEVEL GRADE	UCAS TARIFF POINTS
7, A*	56
6, A	48
B	40
5, C	32
D	24
E	16
4	14
3	12
IB Diploma SL Subjects are worth half the amount of points as HL (for example, Standard Level Grade 5 = 16 UCAS Tariff Points)	
IB EXTENDED ESSAY and THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE	UCAS TARIFF POINTS
A	12
B	10
C	8
D	6
E	4

## 5.7 COMPLETING AND SENDING THE UCAS APPLICATION

This is relatively simple once you have all the information available and we will have school workshops showing you how to do this. The online application will guide you through each field. Make sure you save your form each time you logout of Apply.

### Personal details

Your name must appear as it does on your passport and exam documents.

It is useful to give both a mobile number and a sensible email address you check regularly.

All fields marked with an asterisk are compulsory- your application cannot be sent if you do not provide the information.

Postal address – Oxford address, unless you are not in residence

Home address – address of your parents/family in your home country

Area of permanent residence – your home address.

Residential category - this will be UK Citizen / EU national; or Other if you are an international (Tier 4 Visa) student. This will affect the level of your tuition fees; if in doubt see the UG Team.

We do not anticipate Brexit having any particular effect on this for the next year or two.

Fee code – for most students this will be private finance, option 01.

Special needs - if you have been diagnosed as dyslexic or have another medical condition it is important that you complete this section. The school will need to have this information to allow extra time/special consideration for the exams. You must let your tutor know if you have put an entry into this field and it will be referred to in the reference. If you do not have a special need you should select the code for none.

### **Choices**

You should record your choices in the next section – this will be one of the last sections of the form your complete.

### **Education**

You do not need to enter every school you attended, but you should cover at least the four years at high school (so EF Academy, your previous school before coming here and maybe more schools depending on how often you have changed school).

### **Qualifications**

For current qualifications, put in all your A-Levels, or for IBDP you should include your 6 subjects, TOK and the Extended Essay.

Make sure you put in any qualifications you obtained from your previous school and/or home country.

### **Sending the form**

When it is complete you will need to send it electronically to the UG team for approval.

You need to first check for typos and that you have completed all the required fields. If a section contains errors it will say so.

A member of the UG team will then proofread it and send it back if there are any corrections to be made.

Once you have paid the application fee your application will be sent.

No changes can be made to sent forms.

### **UCAS Extra**

If you receive 'unsuccessful' as a response from all five universities then you may apply to another university for a course that still has vacancies. Universities must reply within 21 days of

you resending your application.

## 5.8 RECEIVING AND ACCEPTING OFFERS

Once the application has been sent, it can take a variable amount of time for universities to make a decision. The record in EF Academy Oxford was for a student to receive an offer less than 24 hours after submitting the application. But some universities can take many weeks to communicate their decision – you will need to be patient. If a university makes an offer, it will normally be conditional on you achieving particular grades at A-Level / IB Diploma. If the offer includes a specific English-language requirement such as IELTS that is just as important.

Once you have received all of your decisions you will need to speak to a member of the UG team to discuss your options in light of your preferences and academic progress. You can accept two offers on UCAS: a “Firm” choice (your top preference) and an “Insurance” choice which asks for slightly lower grades in case something goes wrong in the final exams.

## 5.9 RESULTS DAY AND AFTERWARDS

Students receive IB Diploma results in early July. You can access these over the internet. A-Level results come out in mid-August and are emailed to students by the school. All results are sent separately to UCAS who also send them on to the universities.

### **After you receive your results**

If you fulfil the conditions of your offer, the university will contact you and officially offer you a place. If you miss your firm offer but obtain your insurance offer, then your insurance university will contact you directly and offer you a place. You are expected to attend this university so make sure your insurance choice is a choice you are happy with.

If you just miss your conditional offer then you or the UGC can contact the university to see if they will take you with a lower points total or grades. Many universities will still take students if they just miss out on the offer, but if you are a long way off they are likely to say no. The most competitive universities (Oxford, Cambridge, LSE, UCL, Imperial) will probably say no even if you miss by a single grade or point.

### **Clearing**

If you fail to meet the conditions of the universities you finally chose you can still obtain a place at a British university. You can enter the “Clearing” system. UCAS will publish a list of universities on its website from the second half of July which still have vacancies on certain courses. You can contact a university directly and ask what their entrance requirements are for a particular course. If you have enough points then you could apply there.

You should only contact universities where you would really like to study and with a course you really want to study. Once you accept you cannot refuse or you will be withdrawn from the whole system for that academic year and will have to reapply the following October/January. Clearing applications are normally done via telephone because it is the fastest way. Many thousands of students gain places via clearing each year and almost all universities have courses



available in clearing, with the exception of the most competitive universities listed above.

### **Adjustment**

If your final grades are higher than those of your Firm choice offer, you have the opportunity to “trade up” to a university which normally asks for the higher grades (typically higher-ranked). You do not lose the existing offers. It works just like Clearing, you need to check vacancies on UCAS and speak to the universities directly.

## 6.0 STUDYING MEDICINE IN THE UK

In the UK, as in most European countries, you can apply directly for Medicine as an 18-year-old having completed A-Levels or IB Diploma or an equivalent qualification. There are many universities which have Medicine degrees, a simple online search will show you various rankings. All of the UK medical schools are very good, and all medicine courses are highly competitive. In fact Medicine is probably the most competitive course that a student can apply for. There are a few things that are considered pre-requisites:

- A-Level grades minimum of AAA or IB Diploma minimum of 36 (higher for Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial)
- A considerable amount of medical experience such as shadowing doctors in a hospital, a doctor’s surgery, an old people’s home, a hospice or in a charity such as St John Ambulance. The more experience you have, the better. No UK university will consider your application without this medical experience. It is fine if most of the experience has been done in your home country or outside the UK, but at least some experience should be gained here so you can show you are familiar with the UK NHS (National Health Service):

You can apply for work experience at an Oxford hospital by applying to Oxford University hospitals by late February at the following web address:  
<http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/working-for-us/jobs/work-experience.aspx>

It is also possible to volunteer through various schemes at the hospitals:  
<http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/get-involved/volunteering.aspx>

- Check for specific grade requirements for examinations taken when you were 16 years of age (the equivalent of GCSEs). If you do not meet these requirements then your application will not be successful before your personal statement is even read by an admissions tutor. This is particularly important for Maths and English. Some universities are more particular about this than others, so if you have another international qualification instead of GCSE (e.g. the Brazilian or Italian school grades at that age) you must directly check with the university that these are acceptable in place of GCSE. This information is often not available through the university’s own website.

- You should normally be aged 18 by the time you start the Medicine degree. A few universities formerly had exceptions to this rule, but as most universities now have patient contact from the first term of the degree, the age restriction has become standard.
- All UK universities require Medicine applicants to sit an exam, either the UCAT or the BMAT. See more information about this at the sites below:  
<https://www.medschools.ac.uk/studying-medicine/applications>  
<http://www.ucat.ac.uk/>  
<https://www.admissionstesting.org/for-test-takers/bmat/>
- Broadly, most universities require UCAT but some of the highest-ranked universities require BMAT. It is a lot of work to prepare for both tests so consider which university medical schools you are interested in carefully.

## 6.1 UK MEDICINE COURSES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Medicine is the only degree for which a quota system is in place for non-EU students, i.e. although such students can apply, the number of places is restricted. For example, there are around 180 places per year in Oxford University for medicine, but only 14 are available to non-EU students. This means that it is even more competitive for such students. However, a couple of UK universities now offer medicine courses specifically aimed at international (i.e., non-EU) students. Their entrance requirements are high but often a little bit lower than some other UK universities. If you are eligible, speak to the UG team to find out more about these:

[http://www.uclan.ac.uk/courses/bachelor\\_medicine\\_bachelor\\_surgery.php](http://www.uclan.ac.uk/courses/bachelor_medicine_bachelor_surgery.php)

<https://www2.aston.ac.uk/study/courses/medicine-mbchb>

<https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/medicine/undergrad/mbchb>

## 6.2 GRADUATE MEDICINE

An increasingly popular option among students is not to study medicine directly after high school, but instead to complete a 3-year undergraduate degree in an appropriate science (e.g. Biology, Biomedical Sciences, Physiology, Chemistry) and then to apply for accelerated graduate medicine. Graduate medicine normally lasts 4 years (versus the 5-6 of undergraduate medicine), so in total the student spends 1-2 years longer at university than if they had entered undergraduate medicine directly from high school. However, graduate medicine is somewhat less competitive, requiring normally a 2.1 or higher in the undergraduate degree plus a decent score in the GAMSAT (the graduate equivalent test of BMAT/UKCAT). More than one student from EF Academy has qualified to be a doctor this way, and in fact medical professionals often prefer training graduate medics because they know more science and have a greater degree of maturity than students straight from high school. In some countries, such as the USA, graduate medicine is the only possible option in any case.

## 6.3 OTHER OPTIONS

If you apply for Medicine in the UK you may find that you finish up with a series of ‘unsuccessful’ replies from universities. You may decide to apply to another country for a medicine degree. A number of countries offer medicine through the medium of English, but if they are Anglophone countries the requirements will normally be as high, or similar to the UK.

### **CANADA**

Most medicine programmes in Canada are postgraduate (similar to the USA); there are some combined programmes which allow undergraduate entry, but the quotas for non-Canadian applicants are extremely restrictive so that almost no international students are accepted onto these courses.

### **IRELAND**

There are five universities in the Republic of Ireland which have undergraduate Medicine programmes. The scores indicated here are a minimum; because there are few medical schools in Ireland, it is even more competitive than the UK to get a place.

Trinity College Dublin: (42 points / A\*A\*A)

Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland: (36 points / AAA)

University College Cork: (36 points / AAA)

National University of Ireland Galway: (36 points / AAA)

University College Dublin: (40-42 points / A\*A\*A)

Applying to Irish universities requires students to apply through Central Applications Office for Ireland (<http://www.cao.ie/>) which is the Irish equivalent of UCAS. The deadline for applications is February 1st.

In addition, Medicine applicants must also register for the HPAT Ireland which is the Irish equivalent of BMAT and UCAT (<http://www.hpat-ireland.acer.edu.au/>). The deadline for registration is around January 20th and the test takes place around February 25th.

### **AUSTRALIA**

Some Australian universities have direct-entry undergraduate medicine programmes; others have combined undergraduate-graduate programmes. Generally scores of AAA+/38+ are required, plus the UMAT test (the Australian equivalent of BMAT).

### **SINGAPORE**

Imperial College London has also help set up an undergraduate Medicine programme at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Students must take the BMAT as they would at Imperial in order to be considered for the course.

### **USA**

As mentioned above, Medical School in the USA is for graduates. Students wishing to train to be a doctor in the USA should complete a first degree (ideally with relevant science major) at a US college before applying to graduate medicine. It is almost impossible to be accepted for

medicine if your first degree is from an institution outside the USA. The best strategy is to research colleges which have a good record of graduates getting into med school; for example, a student from EF Academy Oxford chose Haverford College (a liberal arts college in Philadelphia) because a high proportion of its pre-med graduates were accepted into medical school.

### **OTHER COUNTRIES**

There are many medicine schools around the world. If there is a specific country that you are interested in then use the Wikipedia page below to get names of universities and then visit the university websites to find out more information. For the most part, countries teach medicine in the primary native language of that country, since most qualifying doctors will go on to practice medicine there.

Smaller Anglophone countries with medical schools include Malta, Cyprus and several Caribbean countries. However, an increasing number of universities are offering medicine courses through the medium of English. Several of these are in eastern Europe, but there are now a couple in Italy and elsewhere too.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical\\_school](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_school)

## 7.0 THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

The personal statement is fundamental to your university application as it tells the university about your motivation for studying a subject and may well help you impress a university if it is well written. The following guidance is for the UCAS Personal Statement but much of it will be applicable to other European countries, Canada and Australia.

- 70% of your personal statement should be about why you are interested/motivated to study a particular course and what knowledge and skills you have to enable you to succeed.
- It should be 4000 characters (including spaces and punctuation) and 47 lines long.
- Talk about your academic ability in your academic subjects which are relevant to that course.
- Mention extracurricular activities which give you skills/qualities relevant to that course.
- Don't talk about things you did in middle school.
- Every university you apply to will see your personal statement so don't write things such as "it has always been my dream to study only at Cambridge" because all the other universities will see it and not like it or you!

We provide workshops and guidance on how to write the personal statement. The information below is a simplified version of our information to give you an idea of what is expected.

Try to think of an example from Pathway or extracurricular activities which illustrates each of the skills below. Avoid using the same example twice. Describe the experience and what you learned from it in detail, don't just make a list.

**Also think about:** class presentations, class projects, internal assessments, TOK, EE, science practicals, TOK and CAS.

## 7.1 PERSONAL STATEMENT STRUCTURE

### Paragraph 1

This is in many ways the most important paragraph. You need a HOOK - something which grabs the university admissions officer's attention and makes you stand out from the other applicants.

- Something from an extracurricular activity? An inspirational lecture or activity?
- An interesting topic which you studied in class?
- Something which happened to you or you saw while travelling?
- Something you've seen on the departmental page of a university website?
- An interesting experience from an internship or summer school?

**The experience must relate directly to the degree course. You will not impress a university because:**

- You have studied in Oxford.
- You have been on holiday for two weeks to many different countries.
- You knew since you were five years old that it's what you wanted to do.
- "It's always been my dream..."
- "My father is a doctor..."

### Paragraph 2

- More about your enthusiasm for the chosen subject.
- Include any practical or work experience you have had in this paragraph.
- Link it directly back to the course or units you will study on the course.
- Visit university websites about the course to see if they have any skills they are looking in your personal statement or any themes or particular aspects of the course they are highlighting that you may have relevant experience of.

#### *Example*

Biological sciences > theme  
> ecosystems

Student experience > visiting glaciers or rainforest on several occasions and seeing the differences  
> receding glacier or increased destruction of the rainforest.

### Paragraphs 3 & 4

- These paragraphs should demonstrate your enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity for the chosen degree.
- They should highlight what you think are the most academic skills for the course. You can find this out by looking at the course and departmental webpages of your chosen universities.
- Everything has to link directly back to the degree course.
- If you include any famous texts in the field, don't just mention them, you must analyse (briefly) and give some kind of opinion about it.

### Paragraph 5

- Your extracurricular/CAS/Pathway activities
- Pick a maximum of around three activities
- Start with the academic skill the university is looking for, show how the activity demonstrates it and then link it back to why you would be great for the course.

### Paragraph 6

- This should be your concluding paragraph.
- You could use a quote but it must relate directly to the degree course so don't quote "I have a dream" by MLK.
- Keep something special back from the body of the personal statement that makes you stand out; an experience or something you have read about.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE**

UCAS keeps a database of every personal statement which has ever been submitted. DO NOT be tempted to copy parts of a statement from your friends, from the internet or from any other source. If any of the material has been used before, UCAS will flag it for plagiarism (copying) and the universities may reject your application automatically.

## 7.2 WHY NOT TRY THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE TO GET YOU STARTED

The personal statement is about demonstrating that you have the motivation and skills to be successful on a degree course. The skills listed below are the most sought after by universities. What evidence can you give from your classes or extracurricular activities of the following:

STRENGTHS/SKILLS	PROOF/EXPERIENCE
Organisation	
Leadership	
Service/helping others	
Academic ability in a given field	
Teamwork/ability to work with others	
Sport relate to above skills	
Ability to motivate	
Ability to think on your feet	
Commitment	
Thinking differently	
Willingness to experience new cultures/ meet new people	

Commitment to learning	
Improving myself	
Thirst for knowledge	
Linguistic ability	
Communication	
Creativity	
Intellectual curiosity	

### 7.3 EXAMPLES

The following are real examples of first paragraphs for a variety of degree subjects from past EF Academy Oxford students who had very successful university applications:

#### Medicine

“Emergency Caesarean in OR1” were the words that made the Neonatologist rush out of the Intensive Care unit, where 6 newborns were under controlled gentamicin and ampicillin medication. A primipareous mother with only 29 gestation weeks and 10 hours of labour was being given oxygen when the surgery started. After an astounding and collaborative effort, there it was - a tiny, helpless boy - who took his first breath and brought mine back when he started to cry. In less than 5 minutes, the baby, who received an APGAR score of 6 at birth, was being admitted into ICU while I was completing his medical file. I was emotionally drained by the experience but needless to say, I was back the next morning for more.

This summer I was selected for a placement at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, where I spent 3 days shadowing consultants in 4 different departments. Like a doctor there, I started my final day in the Transplant Centre expecting to be there for 8 hours but finished after 14 hours with two kidney transplant surgeries of which I didn't expect to be part. When during the 2nd surgery the department experienced a shortage in the number of nurses, I was asked to step in and help with recording the times at which different procedures took place as well as completing the paperwork - crucial for post-surgical reports. I not only observed the importance of high level manual dexterity but also the unfaltering mental strength with which the surgeons operated, especially when urine started flowing unexpectedly through an unnoticed hole in the suture. The hectic nature of the experience was what enthralled me and opened my eyes to the need for and importance of correct and rapid decision-making in critical conditions.

#### Politics/History

My interest in history and politics is rooted in the moral implications of political decisions, and how those made in the present can be compared to those made in the past. For example, the humanitarian aspect of the Norwegian Heavy Water Sabotage strikes a particular chord in the context of current political policies. In 1942-44, Britain stressed the importance of not putting

the local Norwegian population in danger of reprisals by ensuring all blame would be on Britain. By contrast, in Norway now the immigration policy includes deporting many immigrants when they turn 18 despite them having lived in Norway almost their entire lives. What fascinates me about the ethical contexts of these Norwegian examples is how economic expediency in peacetime contrasts unfavourably with the higher morality applied in wartime.

The politics of the present is always in dialogue with history. During an Oxford lecture on the First World War, Jeremy Paxman argued that dominant powers have to take action from time to time in order to "be taken seriously". I was reminded of his words when I attended the Cambridge University MUN Conference where our focus was the Falklands Crisis of 1982. Was Thatcher's assertive response to the Argentine invasion an example of Paxman's argument? I think that is a partial explanation, but that she also sensed the mood of the electorate and took full advantage of the situation.

### **Law**

My desire to study Law at university was reinforced by our discussions in TOK, in which we discussed whether the "Body World" exhibition by Gunther von Hagens should be legally authorised to take place. The discussions made me aware of Law having many facets, as well as teaching me how to combine logical approaches with reasonable thinking to get a justified conclusion. The exhibition was primarily allowed as it can be considered as educational Art. I came to the conclusion that it should be authorised since the donors signed a contract and agreed with the purpose of using their cadavers for therapy, educational aims and research. Nevertheless I understand if some countries don't accept the exhibition because for them it is a violation of the dignity of the human body.

### **Engineering**

My home was in an industrial city with the biggest oil refinery in Thailand. That environment taught me the importance of energy and its cost. Although our region generates the highest GDP in the nation, people are under threat of poor health due to high levels of pollution. Saving lives is not just the doctors' obligation but also the engineers'. Knowing the importance of low carbon energy, my Extended Essay investigated the effect of solar panel's variables, to improve the efficiency of energy conversion. Multiple areas of physical science are involved, for many factors from ambient temperature to light incidence. By using an incandescent bulb as a light source in the experiment, I achieved a more similar light emission pattern to sunlight than a typical household bulb. My initial hypothesis was incorrect; I assumed that using UV light in the higher frequency light spectrum would result in higher energy output by the solar panel. However, the conversion is more complex than this due to the nature of the photoelectric effect and the fact that if the threshold frequency is met electrons can be displaced with current proportional to amplitude. It is research into more complex semiconducting materials which can improve efficiency here.

## **8.0 APPLYING TO UNIVERSITIES IN THE USA**



## 8.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

You can apply to as many universities as you want. There is no equivalent to UCAS. However, it is possible to apply to multiple universities at once using online platforms. The most popular is the “Common Application” which you can access through [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org). An alternative is the Coalition. Certain university systems, such as The University of California, are not available on these platforms and you have to use their own online systems. Most US colleges, even if they accept the Common Application, will have a ‘supplement’ which you will also need to complete as part of your application.

US colleges generally do not have a specific minimum set of grades they require, unlike the UK. Instead they have what they call a “holistic” approach to admissions, considering GPA, test scores, application essays, extracurricular and other achievements. However, by researching online you can find the typical scores of the students who are admitted, often expressed as lower, median and upper quartiles. If your grades and scores are in the median or higher, you have a fair chance of being accepted.

## 8.2 ACT / SAT

To apply to a US college or university you have to sit a standardised test. The reason these tests exist is that US High Schools do not have final exams like A-Level or IB Diploma, so the universities there needed a standard way to compare candidates. As an international student, it is not mandatory for you to take these tests; many universities will consider your application with predicted grades as in the UK. However, your chances of being accepted are far higher if you have a good test score, and if you are accepted on the basis of a test it means there will not be a specific grade requirement or condition for your final IB Diploma or A-Level results. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that you prepare for and take standardised tests. Having said that, in 2020-21 most US colleges have announced that for the next year at least, they will be “test optional” as it has become difficult for many students to take tests due to COVID-19.

It does not matter which one you take, as both are accepted by all US institutes of higher education. The ACT has become more popular than the SAT in the USA in the last few years, and we have generally found the ACT to be more straightforward for students who have not been through the American school system. It is best to check out the format for both tests and pick the one you find easiest. There are SAT and ACT test centres in Oxford. You absolutely should not take both SAT and ACT tests; choose one or the other.

### Test registration

To take either test you have to register an account (free) and then book tests (fees payable; surcharges are paid for tests taken outside the USA). Depending on the dates, it may be easier for you to take a test in your own country during the vacation. We recommend that you take the test once towards the end of Year 1 (May-July), and then if you need to improve your score you can take it again in Year 2 (September –December). Most American high school students will typically take the test twice. You can take the tests as many times as you like, and the universities will consider the best scores in each section (English, Math, etc.) that you have

achieved to date.

ACT: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

SAT: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

EF Academy Oxford will provide preparation classes and materials to help you maximise your score in the test. Speak to the UG team for further details.

### **Composition of the Tests**

The composition of the tests is similar, though not exactly the same; please refer to the above websites for details. Both tests will examine your abilities in English (grammar, vocabulary and syntax), Reading Comprehension, and Mathematics. The ACT has a “Science” section for which there is no equivalent on the SAT: but this is not so much a test of your scientific knowledge as of your ability to extract data from tables, charts and graphs, and you certainly do not need to be doing science A-Levels to score highly in this section. Both tests have an optional “Writing” section at the end, where you write an essay based on a particular prompt. This section is not mandatory but we recommend all students to do it, as the best US colleges and universities prefer students to attempt the writing section.

### **SAT II Subject Tests**

As well as the general SAT, Collegeboard also administers tests in specific subjects (e.g. Mathematics, Biology, Spanish). Most universities do not require these, but a small handful of the most highly-ranked institutions do ask for them, particularly if you are hoping to major in a technical subject like engineering. If you are planning to apply somewhere that asks for these tests, you will need to register for and take them also. In terms of difficulty they are not as hard as A-Level or IB Higher Level, but you should check the syllabus as they may cover some topics which you have not studied. Your teachers will be able to help you.

### **Other Information**

Tests are normally on a Saturday morning. The ACT/SAT takes about 4 hours in total including the writing section and breaks.

If you would like your ACT or SAT result sent directly to a specific college, you can ask ACT or Collegeboard to do this on your behalf.

## **8.3 US UNIVERSITY APPLICATION PROCESS**

- Some universities have “early application” where you must apply by late October or the beginning of November of Year 2; otherwise the deadline is around December 31: it varies for each university so you will need to check with individual universities. For example, the University of California deadline is 30 November.
- If you are also applying to the UK or other countries, you should apply to a maximum of 5 or 6 colleges in the USA. Give yourself choices but “don’t make last minute silly applications, it requires time and effort to complete a good application.” - this quote is from a student who successfully applied a few years ago.

- Apply to a range of schools: your ideal school (no matter how high the scores required), 2-3 places you would happily go to which are in your ability range for entrance requirements, and one 'safety' school (an insurance offer where you are definitely sure you will make the grades). For more information on application strategy, see below.
- Many American colleges will ask for at least two or possibly three references so you need to ask your teachers in good time to provide these.
- The UG team also has to write a general reference for you. Just like with UK applications, we contact each of your subject teachers to get a predicted grade, to ask about academic strengths and personal qualities.
- If you are not a native English speaker you will most likely need to sit IELTS/TOEFL and put the score on your application. Some institutions will waive this if you have English B/A in IB Diploma or were schooled in English-speaking countries (being at EF Academy can contribute to this), but you will need to check with each institution.
- The application essays are different to a UCAS personal statement. The focus should be on your own character, rather than your suitability for a particular major. See below for further information.
- Some of the elite institutions may invite applicants to an alumni interview. This means that a graduate of that institution, now based in the UK (perhaps working here, or engaged in postgraduate study or research) will meet you and talk to you to find out whether you are a good fit for the college. These interviews are much more informal than the ones for Oxford or Cambridge, but we will help you to prepare for them.

#### 8.4 COSTS

- Each college application will cost around \$70-80 (plus postage if hard copies are required).
- Tuition fee: a minimum of \$20,000 for an average university rising to at least \$60,000 at places like Harvard, Yale, Stanford or Cornell. Fees and financial aid vary massively so you need to do your research. Accommodation and food will also vary considerably, and you will also have the extra cost of travel to the USA, depending where in the world you are from.
- It is possible to apply for scholarships and there are some websites that will give you the information but you will need to research this before you make your applications. The best all-round site is [myscholly.com](http://myscholly.com).
- Many scholarships are 'merit-based' for which you need a GPA of 4.0. or outstanding test scores.
- Some colleges are 'need-based need blind' which means that they will accept you regardless of whether you can afford to pay the fees or not. The college will base this decision in terms of the financial details your parents fill in on the application form.

#### 8.5 WHERE SHOULD I APPLY?

Colleges such as Yale, Harvard and New York University have very high demand for places so you would need excellent points/grades prediction to have a chance. The above universities will be looking for SAT scores of 1450 / ACT scores of 34 or better.

US colleges also look very carefully at your GPA for the two years of high school before coming to EF Academy Oxford and your grades whilst studying here. If those scores are weak (less than

3.00) then this may limit your choice. The fact you are doing A-Level or IB Diploma (which is more challenging than US High School) is a bonus, especially if your grades are very good.

There are many guides/league tables which the UGC has information on such as US News: (<http://www.usnews.com/education>).

As some colleges are so competitive a very useful strategy is to complete your degree at a lesser known college and then apply to transfer to a better college at the end of the first or second year. This is quite a common practice in North America.

Colleges will also look at your extracurricular activities as these demonstrate many skills which may be relevant to your course.

Colleges are often filling a certain 'demographic' in that they want to accept students from abroad not just from private American schools, so make sure you emphasise this part of your education. Your application will go in a completely different pile because colleges are also trying to emphasise the diversity of their student body.

Another useful website is the Princeton Review website which can help match your needs to suitable colleges.

## 8.6 ACCEPTING A PLACE

- If you apply for the early deadline you normally have a decision by the new year.
- Otherwise it will normally be in March that you will hear whether you have been made an offer.
- They will want to see your official school transcript which you send with your application. The only other thing then is they will want to see your final school transcript after you graduate to see your final GPA. However, if you have taken SAT/ACT as part of the application process, you will normally be guaranteed a place at a US college before you receive your Diploma/A-Level results as your place at a US college is not dependent on your final grades/score – provided you don't fail altogether!
- You will have a certain amount of time to decide whether you want to accept an offer, once you accept it is a binding agreement and you cannot change your mind and go to a different US college. You could only go to a university in a different country.
- Once you accept a place you will be sent lots of information about accommodation.
- You must tell US colleges by early May whether you intend to accept a place. If you are waiting to find out from a UK university as well you must ask to make a 'delayed admission' in which case they will give you more time to make a decision.

## 8.7 SAMPLE US COLLEGE ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

COLLEGE	COURSE	REQUIREMENT
Harvard	Any	SAT: 1500 ACT: 33-36

New York University	Any	SAT: 1400 ACT: 30-34
Brown University	Any	SAT: 1500 ACT: 30-33
Stanford University	Any	SAT: 1500 ACT: 32-36
Emory University	Any	SAT: 1400 ACT: 28-33
Syracuse University	Any	SAT: 1300 ACT: 23-28
Boston University	Any	SAT: 1300 ACT: 28-31
Boston College	Any	SAT: 1300 ACT: 28-31

You can check the grades of the previous year's entrants by googling the 'common data set for X college'.

## 8.8 APPLICATION ESSAYS

As noted above, US colleges do require one or more application essays, but these normally take a different format from the UCAS personal statement. They are more interested in what kind of person you are. They may ask you questions such as:

How have you made a difference in your school or community?

What's your favourite: song, film, memento, book, quote, sport?

Who do you admire most? (Don't choose presidents, actors or grandparents)

Why are you a good match for the college?

Tell us about a time you overcame a failure or setback.

Try to write things about yourself which are different or unique to help you stand out in your application. Some colleges may look for certain qualities or points of view.

If you apply through the CommonApp system you will need to write one general essay which goes to all of the universities, and one or more supplementary questions for each university to which you apply.

Colleges are often interested in your story and how you can differentiate yourself from other students.

It's very important to understand the philosophy of a college and contacting the international admissions office of the college is very important in this process to obtain this information. You then need to link your personality and the events in your life to this philosophy to demonstrate that you're a good fit for the college.

## 8.9 CHOOSING

As with any country, you need to think carefully about what kind of institution you are interested in.

- Big or Small?: some of the best colleges can be very small by most standards, with only a few hundred students. Other big-city universities might have 20,000+ students. Although a small, selective liberal arts college may not have any graduate students, for example, you may find you have far more direct teaching time with professors than in some “big” universities.
- Location: Although a number of universities are located in big cities, it is much more common in the USA for them to be in small towns, often some distance outside major metropolitan areas. So think about what kind of environment would suit you. Of course, the USA is a big country with diverse climate and weather, so you should also consider how you feel about the places subject to extremes of temperature or precipitation.
- Ethos: A higher proportion of US institutions are explicitly Christian or faith-based; others, while not religious often have a particular ethos or mission statement.
- Diversity: you may wish to consider what proportion of students is international, or from what backgrounds the students come.
- Financial Aid: some universities are richer and therefore have far more available in terms of scholarships and financial aid.

### **Classifying universities and colleges academically**

The first table below lists some of the most elite institutions in the USA. These include the most famous universities, but these are also the hardest universities to get accepted at. However, you will see that there are other universities which can provide an education just as good as the Ivy League type universities but which are more acceptable because they are smaller or are public universities. Generally speaking, all of the institutions in the first table are strong across all disciplines they offer.

In the second table, you will see below that universities/colleges can be roughly divided into 3 groups based on discipline:

Tier 1: Require straight A's from the last 4 years, perfect predicted grades and almost perfect test scores and outstanding extracurricular activities and participation. It also helps if you have a parent, relative or teacher who has been a student there and makes regular contributions to their alumnae fund. Their acceptance rate is about 50:1. To put this in perspective, Oxford's is about 11:1. The first group in the table below known as 'Ivies' are all tier 1 universities. If your grades are not perfect then it is almost impossible to access this category of university.

Tier 2: These are still very good universities but are more accessible. You still require very good test scores and will need grades that are A/B.

Tier 3: Still good universities in their field and not easy to get into but definitely accessible. You will need an average of B to access these colleges (at least 30 points in the IB).

The list below is based on the experience of the university guidance counsellors at EF Academy New York. It is not a definitive list of all US colleges but it does mean that these colleges have received applications from EF Academy students and have been categorized accordingly.

<p>“Ivies” (<i>the original 8 colleges in the Ivy League</i>)</p> <p>Harvard Yale Cornell Columbia Brown Dartmouth Princeton Penn</p>	<p>“Ivy Plus”: (<i>Colleges not in the original Ivy League but of similar standards and prestige</i>)</p> <p>Stanford Duke Chicago Northwestern Georgetown Caltech MIT</p>	<p>“Little Ivies” (<i>Generally elite Liberal Arts Colleges</i>)</p> <p>Williams Amherst Middlebury Bowdoin Haverford Swarthmore Wellesley Vassar Hamilton</p>	<p>“Public Ivies” (<i>i.e. public, State-funded universities</i>)</p> <p>Michigan Berkeley UCLA North Carolina at Chapel Hill Texas at Austin College of William and Mary Virginia</p>
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Subjects	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
<p><b>Politics/Int Rel/Law (LSAT)</b></p>	<p>Georgetown American (DC) Princeton UVA (Virginia) Colgate Bowdoin Duke UC Berkeley</p>	<p>Dickinson (Penn) Gettysburg BU Fordham Villanova</p>	<p>Suffolk UMass (very good for Econ)</p>
<p><b>Business</b> (This is more competitive than business studies courses in the UK. A good strategy: apply for economics - which is much less competitive - and then transfer into the business school in your second year)</p>	<p>Babson Chicago Michigan NYU UoPenn UoTexas Austin Berkeley</p>	<p>Wisconsin UoMaryland UC Irvine UC Santa Barbara UIUC Indiana Uni Bloomington Penn State Texas A&amp;M USC UoMinnesota UoLas Vegas SUNY Binghamton SUNY Buffalo UMass</p>	<p>Clark (Mass) Quinnipiac UoConneticut Temple Bentley (finance) UoDelaware Uolowa Ohio State Bryant Michigan State UoArizona Arizona State Johnson and Wales – RI Rutgers – NJ state CUNY – Hunter &amp; Baruch Pace UoNew Hamp</p>

<b>Engineering</b>	Harvey Mudd  West: Caltech UC Davis  MIT Duke UIUC Georgia Tech Cornell	Northeastern – paid internships and course credit UoRochester Rensselaer Polytechnic (near Albany) UMass Drexel – paid internships and course credit (and architecture) Virginia Tech UoTexas, Dallas	WentworthIT – Colleges of the Fenway of Boston WPI – Worcester Poly Inst – SAT optional for IB – send subject tests and piece of work Rutgers Tulsa, Oklahoma – huge IB scholarship – petroleum & gas
<b>Medicine</b>	Johns Hopkins UoMichigan Emory Ivies Little Ivies Rice Vanderbilt UoMiami Tufts	UCSD (San Diego) Tulane (New Orleans) Brandice BU	Oregon State – Corvallis UoGeorgia – experimental sciences Montana state UoColorado Boulder – psych, biochem UoVermont MCPHS (Mass – pharmacy)
<b>Arts:  Design  Fashion  Digital Media  Animation</b>	UoWashington (Seattle) RISD: Rhode Island School of Design Pratt Inst – Brooklyn Parsons FIT MICA (Maryland) SCAD (Savannah – Georgia) Columbus Ohio UoIllinois Urbana-Champaign Vassar – Meryl Streep!	Syracuse UC Santa Cruz SUNY Purchase BARD (NY – creative writing) Sarah Lawrence Wesleyan	Arts Center College of Design LIM – NY – fashion business school SVA – NYC Pace – huge scholarships, average \$10K
<b>Liberal Arts  Psychology  Politics  Econ  Pre-med (Bio, Chem or Neurosci)</b>	Little Ivies (as above): Williams Amherst Middlebury Bowdoin Haverford Swarthmore	Colby Wesleyan Connecticut Coll Wheaton Bates Denison Oberlin	Providence (RI) St Lawrence Rider – NJ with scholarship Oglethorpe Centre College



<b>Little Ivies: Just outside a major city, closed campus</b>	Wellesley Vassar Hamilton	Kenyon McCallister (Minnesota) Skidmore Virginia Commonwealth	
<b>Best of the rest: Rolling Admissions</b>			Michigan State

### Your strategy

As noted above, if you are applying to universities in other countries you should apply to 3-6 (at most) universities in the USA, because multiple applications is a lot of work and expense. If you are applying only to the USA you can increase this number, but remember that sending ten or so applications will involve writing probably more than a dozen essays and sending off some \$800 in application fees.

- **Reach school:** a dream choice university, probably one of the tier 1 universities. Their grade requirements may well be above your current grades meaning that it will be difficult to gain admission. This is why you should only apply to one 'reach school' but if it's your dream then there is no reason why you cannot try.
- **Possible school:** If you do have very good grades then there is no reason why you cannot choose a university/college that has slightly higher grade requirements than your current grades. This means that it's not completely certain that you will be accepted but you have a good chance especially if your test scores are good and you have really good extracurricular activity participation.
- **Likely school:** A university/college that is in line with your current grades so that it means you have an excellent chance of acceptance. You should have about three of this type of university.
- **Safe school:** Apply to one university/college that requires grades and scores below what you have achieved to make sure that a university definitely accepts you. Remember that you should only apply to universities that you would be happy to attend.

### Gaining entrance to a tier 1 or 2 university

It is common in the US to apply to a tier 3 school, get excellent grades and then apply to the second year of a tier 1 or 2 university. Colleges keep a certain number of places in Year 2 for this eventuality so it is well worth pursuing this strategy if your grades are not perfect.

### Contacting Universities and showing you are a good "Fit"

You will have a much better chance of being accepted at a US college if you contact them over the summer. Unlike in Europe, where admissions tutors are normally academics in the relevant faculty, US institutions normally have a separate office of admissions and it pays to build up a relationship with them. Often there might be a particular officer who would be

responsible for students from a particular country or region.

The USA College Day in London is a good opportunity to meet representatives from many universities and give them your contact details. But do not be shy to look up information on the website and email admissions staff directly. You can set up Skype meetings or similar to ask them questions. If you have the chance to visit a university in person do so; we have had students go on big USA road trips to visit universities. This is not practical for everybody, of course. But however you contact them, admissions departments keep a careful record of who contacts the university and they will definitely remember your application if you apply there. This will increase your chances of being accepted.

In your application, make it clear how you could contribute to the life of the university and how you have contributed to the life of the school here. Universities are looking for students who will make a full contribution to the life of their university and 'give something back' while they are there. When we visited Boston University, this was something the admissions tutor mentioned (contributing to the community) at least three times when I spoke to him.

## 8.10 WHEN TO APPLY

### Early decision

This means submitting an application to a university by around November 1st of Year 2. If the university accepts you then you must withdraw from all other universities in the US. Normally this is the option for your absolute top choice number one university. You can only make one Early Decision application at a time.

*A word of caution:* Your early decision college may accept you but not offer you any financial aid or scholarship. This means you are tied into a college where you must pay the full fees so select your early decision university very carefully.

### Early action

This involves applying early as with Early Decision, but if you are offered a place it is non-binding and you have the option of going elsewhere. You can make more than one early action application.

### Regular decision

The normal deadline for most applications is around December 31<sup>st</sup>/January 1<sup>st</sup>.

### Rolling decision

Colleges with rolling admissions do not have a deadline, but instead accept and consider applications until all their places are filled. Some good colleges have rolling admissions, but generally the better-ranked universities do not.

## 9.0 APPLYING TO UNIVERSITIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES

<b>CANADA</b>	
Application system	Apply directly to universities. However, for universities in Ontario, you can use OUAC to apply to multiple universities in the province at once.
Cost	Tuition = \$30,000 CAD for international students Accommodation = \$15,000 CAD for international students Total = \$45,000+ CAD Canadian universities often represent excellent value for money in comparison with US institutions of similar ranking, but because of the popularity of Canada with international students in recent years their prices have gone up considerably.
Required documents	Transcript and personal statement; teacher references generally no longer required
Entry requirements	ABC / 35 / IELTS = 6.5/7.0

<b>AUSTRALIA</b>	
Application system	Apply directly to universities. You can also apply directly through <a href="http://www.studyoptions.co.uk">www.studyoptions.co.uk</a> who will send your single application to universities in both Australia and New Zealand free of charge and check you have all the correct documents.
Cost	Tuition varies widely, but typically = \$30000AUD for international students. The cost of living in Australia can be quite high thanks to several years of continuous economic boom.
Required documents	0-2 teacher references, transcript and personal statement
Entry requirements	ABC / 35 / IELTS = 7.0

<b>THE NETHERLANDS</b>	
Application system	Use the Studielink system (a bit like UCAS, but more limited): <a href="http://info.studielink.nl/en/">info.studielink.nl/en/</a>
Cost	Tuition = c. €9000 for international students (c. €2000 for EU students)
Required documents	1-2 teacher references, transcript and personal statement A few courses (e.g. Economics at Amsterdam University) require a Mathematics test.
Entry requirements	For many universities and courses you simply have to pass the high school diploma. However, increasing numbers of courses are becoming more competitive, requiring ABC/33 points and higher.

To find out about degree courses taught in English and their costs universities anywhere in Europe go to: [www.eunicas.com](http://www.eunicas.com). They will also send your application to anywhere in Europe for a fee, but it is not normally worth making applications using their service. You can find information about medicine degrees in English at European universities on this site as well.

## 10.0 UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

### 10.1 THE MAIN RANKING WEBSITES

The Guardian, The Times and Complete University Guide are some of the most-used rankings simply because they all have elements of neutral organisations such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), Research Excellence Framework (REF) and Unistats which makes them more objective.

QS Top Universities is the most popular worldwide ranking, though others such as the TES and Shanghai JiaoTong exist.

The other important thing to note is that these websites have subject rankings as well and there can be big discrepancies between overall rankings and subject rankings. For example, a university which is not at the top of the overall rankings might be the world leader in a particular discipline (such as environmental science, politics or software engineering).

### 10.2 ISSUES WITH USING RANKING WEBSITES AND LEAGUE TABLES

- Surveys with a strong element of student input (such as The Guardian) can be more subjective because student experiences can vary widely. However, this is mitigated by the use of a large amount of data.
- The issue with a strong emphasis on research is that the bigger universities tend to do better because they have more money and get more papers published and this appears to make them stronger in the rankings. This may be one reason why in world university rankings the USA does very well. US universities charge bigger fees which may allow them to perform more research and thus come out higher in world rankings.
- Sometimes universities are also criticised because they may have good research rankings but the people responsible for the research may not teach very much as they are busy with research.
- Undergraduate students may get teachers who are Masters or Postgraduate students rather than the experts that universities talk about as part of their promotion.
- If you look at combinations of subjects such as Management and Engineering and this can obviously cause problems because the rankings can't include combinations of very different subjects. This limits their effectiveness.

### 10.3 THE METHODOLOGY OF RANKING SYSTEMS

Each ranking uses various criteria, such as the entry requirements to get onto courses, the

proportion of students who graduate with First Class Degrees, the amount of research publications by the university's faculty, and so forth. These criteria are then weighted and averaged to get an overall score. Scores tend to cluster together which means that very small changes year-on-year can move universities several places up or down in the rankings. Therefore it is important to look at positions over the long term.

Different rankings give different weight to the criteria. For example, newer rankings will focus more on what it is actually like to be a student at a university, and make use of information gathered from the National Student Survey:

### **National Student Survey**

- Teaching on my Course
- Assessment and Feedback
- Academic Support
- Organisation and Management
- Learning Resources
- Personal Development
- Overall satisfaction

Available from: <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>

The best ranking to give an impression of the UK student experience is this one:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/universityguide>

The Times publishes another respected UK university ranking which focuses more on reputation and research, but it requires a subscription to access. A good free ranking which has similar results to The Times is this one:

<http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/>

Every seven years the UK government assesses the research quality of UK universities:

<http://www.ref.ac.uk>

The most popular international university ranking is:

<https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings>

Other international rankings include the Times Educational Supplement.

For the USA there are many rankings, the most widely-quoted is the US News. It actually comprises a number of different league tables, normally broken down by type of university (e.g. four-year colleges, liberal arts colleges, public universities) or by region (e.g. best universities in

New England, best universities in the south-west):

<https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges>

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: HELPFUL WEBSITES

#### UK

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

[bridge-u.com](http://bridge-u.com)

<https://university.which.co.uk/>

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>

#### European degrees taught in English

[www.eunicas.com](http://www.eunicas.com)

#### The Netherlands

[Info.studielink.nl/en](http://Info.studielink.nl/en)

[www.nuffic.nl/en/](http://www.nuffic.nl/en/)

#### Germany

[www.uni-assist.de](http://www.uni-assist.de)

#### USA

[www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

[www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)

[www.usnews.com/education](http://www.usnews.com/education)

[www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)

#### Canada

[www.universitystudy.ca](http://www.universitystudy.ca)

#### Australia

[www.studyoptions.com](http://www.studyoptions.com)

[www.gooduniguide.com.au/](http://www.gooduniguide.com.au/)

[www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/](http://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/)

#### UK, USA and International Financial Aid/Scholarships/Loans

[www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

[www.nus.org](http://www.nus.org)

<https://www.thescholarshiphub.org.uk/>

[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

[myscholly.com](http://myscholly.com)

[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

[www.foreign.fulbrightonline.org](http://www.foreign.fulbrightonline.org)

[www.iefaf.org](http://www.iefaf.org)

## **Gap Year**

[www.gapyeardirectory.co.uk](http://www.gapyeardirectory.co.uk)

[www.gapyear.com](http://www.gapyear.com)

[www.globalvolunteerprojects.org](http://www.globalvolunteerprojects.org)

## **Careers**

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice>

<https://www.ucas.com/careers-advice>

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/home>

[www.careers.org](http://www.careers.org)



## APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF PATHWAYS ACTIVITIES 2018-2019

### Term 1

Science, Technology and Engineering	Bio-Medical Sciences	Business, Finance and Management	Economics, Law and Politics	Cultural and Creative Studies	Supplementary Pathways
Earthquakes from Space Lecture, Museum of Natural History	Trip to University Botanic Gardens	Student Investor Challenge (ongoing)	Fake News and the Politics of Truth Lecture, Oxford University	Enemy of the People Theatre visit	Visit to Oxford University
Trip to New Scientist Live in London	Cochrane UK Seminar on Evidence-Based Medicine	BMW Mini Factory Visit	Friends of Philosophy: Ethics talk and Sartre	User not Found Theatre Trip	Strategy meetings for Elite & US university applications
Seminar on Astrophysics and studying at Imperial College London with EF Alumna Varvara	Cancer Research masterclass	10 Years since the Global Financial Crisis lecture, Oxford University	Model United Nations conference at Cambridge University	School Book Group (ongoing)	USA College Day, London
Chemistry trip to The Artisan Distillery	BMAT Test Science classes (ongoing)	Jaguar Land Rover Group Visit	Economics Core Booster Sessions	Architecture & Conflict Lecture, Brookes University	Visit from the University of Toronto
Extension Maths with EF Alumnus Arman (ongoing)	Biology Olympiad	Shaping the Future Lecture, Oxford University	Democracy and Development in Africa Lecture, Oxford University	Theatre trip – 6 Women	Visit from IE University Madrid
Chemistry of Pigments masterclass with Michael Busby	Café Scientifique seminar on biodiversity and climate change	Future Shape of the Workforce Lecture, Said Business School	Blackwell's Philosophy – Warbuton and Prideaux in conversation	Ashmolean Live! Evening - Spellbound	Visit to EF University Fair in London and to Westminster University
Maths in Action trip to	Party in a Petri Dish at the Museum of Natural History		Isiah Berlin on Liberty,	Woman in Black trip to London	SAT/ACT Multiple choice test preparation classes (ongoing)
				Blood Brothers production visit Oxford	UCAS Drop-in sessions for applications (ongoing)

Warwick University			Wolfson College		
Maths Olympiad					
Chemistry & Biology in Action trips					
Physical Sciences Showcase					
Physics Olympiad					

## Term 2

Science, Technology and Engineering	Bio-Medical Sciences	Business, Finance and Management	Economics, Law and Politics	Cultural and Creative Studies	Supplementary Pathways
Trip to Marcus du Sautoy Lecture, Birmingham	Trip to Museum of Natural History	Big Banks and Corruption Seminar, Blavatnik School of Government	Model United Nations Conference with St Clare's School	Theatre trip to the Unreturning, London	Seminar on studying at US Universities with EF Alumna Anna
Seminar on Studying Physics and Dutch Universities with EF Alumna Laura	Masterclass on imaging pain in the developing brain	Seminar / masterclass on Management as a career	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 70 Lecture, Mansfield College	Frantic Assembly Drama Workshop	Strategy Meetings for Medicine, Engineering, Science, Business, Creative Arts
Stargazing at Oxford University	BMAT Test Science classes (ongoing)	Current shifts in Economic Governance Lecture, Blavatnik School of Government	Lecture on the Economics of Migration, Oxford Martin School	EF Short Story Competition	UCAS Application Drop-in Sessions
From EF to Crime Scene	Trip to the Freud Museum, London			Trip to the Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time, London	

Investigator – A Story of Forensics	Masterclass on Bacteria and Pathology research	Year 2 Business Studies revision and booster trip	History trip to the British Museum and the Imperial War Museum, London	The Shroud Maker theatre visit, London	SAT/ACT Multiple choice test preparation classes (ongoing)	
Motorsport Engineering Lecture, Mathematical Institute			The Economics of Climate Change lecture, Oxford Martin School	Architecture as a Career and Applying for Architecture at university masterclass		Aptitude test essay-writing classes (ongoing)
Extension Maths with EF Alumnus Arman (ongoing)			Plato’s Republic Seminar, Blackwell’s Philosophy	Francesca Beard Poetry Workshop		EF Academy Internship Scheme Applications
Augmented Reality seminar			Friends of Philosophy: Cosmic Fine- tuning Seminar			Visit to Southampton University
Trip to Rutherford Appleton Laboratory						Visit from StudyOptions on Australian and New Zealand Universities
Trip to CCFE Culham Fusion Reactor						
Physics Olympiad A- Level Challenge						

### Term 3

Science, Technology and Engineering	Bio-Medical Sciences	Business, Finance and Management	Economics, Law and Politics	Cultural and Creative Studies	Supplementary Pathways
The Universe Speaks in	Moving in a Nanoworld,	Trip to Renault	21 <sup>st</sup> Century Diplomacy	Trips to Babel & Thinking 3D	Multiple- Choice and

Numbers Lecture, Mathematical Institute	Oxford University Museum of Natural History	Formula 1 Team	Lecture, Wolfson College	exhibitions, Weston Library	Essay Test Drop-in sessions (ongoing)
The Life and Days of an Engineer Seminar in school	Developmental Psychology trip to BabyLab, Oxford Brookes University	A2 Business and Economics Revision Trips	Philosophy trip to hear A.C. Grayling, at the New College of Humanities, London	Utopia in the Anthropocene Lecture, Oxford Brookes University	After School Personal Statement Workshops (ongoing)
Oxford Maths Festival	Dementia and the Brain Lecture, St Hilda's College		Complexity in Economics Lecture, Oxford Martin School	Summer Shorts Performances	History Aptitude Test Preparation Classes (Ongoing)
The Creativity Code Lecture, Oxford University	A2 Psychology Revision Trip				Skype meetings with EFA NY university counsellors for US Applicants
	Biology Olympiad/BMAT preparation classes (ongoing)				CAS Field trips
	ESS Field trips to Earth Trust				UCAS and application system Workshops
					Visit to Bath University

## EXAMPLES OF WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

### This week's Pathways Activities at a glance

Week of 28 Jan	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<i>Science, Technology, Engineering</i>	Can Science Explain Everything? Lecture, Oxford Town Hall 19:30	Engineering Strategy Meeting 13:00 Room 215		Motorsport Engineering Lecture, Mathematical Institute 18:30		
<i>Biomedical Sciences</i>			Masterclass on Imaging Pain in the Developing Brain, Lab 12:55	The Societies inside you Lecture, Museum of Natural History 18:30		Archery
<i>Business, Management &amp; Finance</i>		Rule Britannia - Brexit and the End of Empire Lecture, St Peter's College 18:00				
<i>Int'l Relations, Politics, Law &amp; Economics</i>				History trip to London (British Museum, Imp War Museum)		
<i>Arts, Media &amp; Cultural Studies</i>	Remember the writing competition is ongoing!					
<i>Supplementary Pathways Activities</i>		Extension Maths with Arman, Cotuit 17:00	Multiple Choice Aptitude Tests 13:00 Room 215	BMAT Science prep with Ian, Lunchtime	Test Essay-Writing prep with Cy, Room 206 12:50	
<i>CLUBS (see full listing opposite)</i>	<i>French, German, Drama, MUN, Chess</i>	<i>Engineering, History, Art for Change, Spanish, Maths Challenge</i>	<i>Science Ethics (selected Wednesdays), Duke of Edinburgh, Cancer Research Group, Yearbook, Maths Cafe</i>	<i>Law, Italian</i>	<i>Drama, Agogé</i>	

### This week's Pathways Activities at a glance

Week of 4 Mar	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT
<i>Science, Technology, Engineering</i>	Masterclass on Bacteria and Pathology with Mickey Lee, Room 212 15:00		Trip to RA Laboratory  'Black Holes and Spin-offs' lecture, Museum of Natural History 17:00	Trip to CCFE Culham Fusion Reactor	British Physics Olympiad AS Challenge Paper, Room 204 12:35	
<i>Biomedical Sciences</i>						
<i>Business, Management &amp; Finance</i>			EF Internship Presentation, Room 208 12:50			
<i>Int'l Relations, Politics, Law &amp; Economics</i>					Populism & Post-Truth Lecture, Mansfield College 17:00	
<i>Arts, Media &amp; Cultural Studies</i>		Francesca Beard Poetry Workshop, Cotuit		Seminar on Architecture & applying for it to University, Room 212 16:40		
<i>Supplementary Pathways Activities</i>		Extension Maths with Arman, Cotuit 17:00			Test Essay-Writing prep with Cy, Room 206 12:50	
<i>CLUBS (see full listing opposite)</i>	<i>French, German, Drama, MUN, Chess</i>	<i>Engineering, History, Art for Change, Spanish, Maths Challenge</i>	<i>Science Ethics (selected Wednesdays), Duke of Edinburgh, Cancer Research Group, Yearbook, Maths Cafe</i>	<i>Law, Italian, Biology Olympiad</i>	<i>Drama, Agogé</i>	

## APPENDIX 3: PREDICTED GRADES POLICY

The UK university system is unusual in that you apply to university a long time before you have your final diploma grades. This means that the school has to send “Predicted Grades” to universities as part of your university application.

### WHAT ARE THE PREDICTED GRADES?

The grades sent to the universities are the best grades that your teachers think you would be able to achieve at the end of the course if you work hard and studies go to plan. Teachers use different sources of information to decide on a predicted grade:

- On-Track and Assessment Grades you have achieved so far in your course
- Internal examination results
- Contribution and attitude in class (attendance, participation, homework)
- Additional reading and Pathways activities inside and outside the subject syllabus.

The OTG and AG grades are the most important part of this process, because they provide a record of your progress and attainment to date. This is why it is important to work hard all the way through your two years at EF Academy Oxford.

### HOW DO TEACHERS DECIDE WHAT GRADES TO GIVE?

Teachers will decide on Predicted Grades which are optimistic, but realistic, based on the factors listed above. The grade will not necessarily be the most likely final grade, but the best one you could achieve with hard work. For example, if, based on your previous work the teacher thinks you are most likely to get a 5 at the end of the course, but with hard work and application you have a 40% chance of getting a 6, the teacher will probably give a predicted grade of 6.

However, in order to receive a higher predicted grade, you must show evidence via assessment that you have the potential to get this higher grade. The student whose work has always been D or C in a subject will not get a prediction of A, for example, but could get B if they produce some work of that standard.

### CHECKING THE OVERALL PREDICTION

Before they are sent to universities we check the whole profile of grades to make sure they are an accurate reflection of your potential. This is very important, especially for IB Diploma students. If every teacher gives an optimistic prediction, an IB student can have a total predicted score 6 (or more) points higher than their current level of attainment. We must make sure that overall the grades are not too high for you, because if you only get offers at high levels, you can afford for nothing to go wrong in your coursework and final exams and we want you to have the best options when you get your results. We want to make sure that the strongest predictions are in the subjects which are most important for your university choices. We want to make your application look as strong as possible for the universities, but

also make sure they have confidence in the prediction, and scores of 40+ in IBDP and multiple A\* grades in A-Level need to be considered carefully.

It is essential to make sure that any scores or subject combinations at any level meet the university's minimum requirements. It is **your** responsibility to check these as part of your research into university courses, and we will discuss these with you before the application is sent. Every university is different in the way it deals with applications and it is important to talk to us in detail about your options.

## UPDATES

Finally, it is possible to update universities on Predicted Grades even after your application is sent, if you make very good progress in a subject and the teacher decides a higher grade is merited. This may strengthen your application. However, universities are not obliged to accept information after the deadline, so you should work hard to ensure you will have the best prediction possible before the application is sent. Normally, a university's decision is final. Once the application is sent, it is essential to maintain a high level of commitment and work, in order to achieve the grades which have been predicted. Do not be tempted to work very hard up to first term of Year 2 in order to get good predictions, only then to 'take your foot off the gas'. Teachers will work with you all the way through to final summer exams so that you can realise your potential.