

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS ON UCAS PROCEDURE

UCAS stands for Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. It is a clearing house which administers the process. It is responsible for

- (i) Acknowledging receipt of applications.
- (ii) Passing on applications to the appropriate colleges/universities
- (iii) Advising students about the outcome of their applications
- (iv) Informing universities when final decisions are made.

You will be the 2020 cycle or cohort (when you apply, the 2019 cycle will still be open, but this is for the current Year 13 who have just completed A Level exams in the summer, so don't use it)

DATES FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

- 1st September 2019 to 15th January 2020 for most courses.
- 1st September to 15th October 2019 for Oxford and Cambridge and for Medical, Dental and Veterinary courses (MDV).

DEADLINES FOR RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS IN SCHOOL

- Friday 6th December 2019 for most applications.
- Friday 4th October 2019 for Oxford, Cambridge, and MDV applications.

It is essential that these internal deadlines are met as it takes time for administration and to complete the processing to meet final UCAS deadlines.

OUR ADVICE

- Make your application as soon as you have made your decisions about your course/universities.
- Make sure you are certain about your courses before submitting the applications as changes cannot easily be made later.

LATE APPLICATIONS

Although it is possible to apply after 15th January 2020, these applications are treated as "late" and forwarded to institutions only if they have suitable vacancies remaining.

DEFERRED ENTRY

If a student wishes to defer until September 2021, it is possible to apply in the 2020 application cycle. In most cases this is advisable (e.g. for students who will not be available for applications or interview in the 2021 cycle).

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

The UCAS form is in four parts:

- Personal details and courses applied for;
- Academic achievements and examinations to be taken;
- A personal statement by the student;
- A reference which includes predicted A Level grades and comments by the staff who teach the student. It is prepared by the form tutor in consultation with other members of staff – following the implementation of GDPR protocol students will be provided with a PDF copy of this reference

Post-18 Applications Days are two days in the summer term, when Year 12 students are taken off timetable to be given advice on the UCAS and job application processes. During this time, the students will be able to view the electronic application system and will receive advice on writing personal statements and making choices about universities and courses. There will also be opportunities to talk to former students currently at university or on a gap year and to listen to university admissions tutors and employers. Also, every student will have a mock university or job interview to help him/her prepare for life post-school.

PROCESS IN SCHOOL

All applications are made electronically.

Students will complete the first three sections directly onto the form, on screen, which has a number of built in checks for common mistakes.

- When the student has completed their part of the application, they make a payment online – the fee was £24 last year (in rare cases, some students only apply to one institution at a reduced cost);
- To trigger the reference writing process, students should email their form tutor (or the Oxbridge / MDV advisor) who then constructs that student's UCAS reference;
- The advisor completes the final reference page of the electronic form and it is then forwarded directly to UCAS.

TESTS

Some universities including Oxford and Cambridge require students to sit a pre-interview test; likewise some courses such as Medicine and Law might require students to sit tests also. Students need to ensure they research these and make any necessary administration arrangements.

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE APPLICATIONS

- Students are frequently asked to submit written work, usually by mid-November;

- Students applying to Cambridge will also need to complete a Supplementary Application Questionnaire by 22nd October – details of how to do this can be found on the University of Cambridge website;
- Help is given both with the completion of the form and the selection of the written work;
- An interview workshop will be delivered by an admissions tutor from one of the universities;
- Students are advised to carefully manage their application, following advice given at various stages of Year 12 – Oxbridge applications are more intricate than those made solely to other universities.

COMMUNICATION WITH UCAS / UNIVERSITIES

- Receipt of the application is acknowledged quickly;
- UCAS sends a letter detailing all the courses applied for which must be checked carefully;
- Each applicant is given a unique reference number. The students must make a note of this as it will be used in all UCAS related correspondence;
- A reduced copy of the form is sent by UCAS to all the universities applied to and they consider each application. Applications are “invisible” in that each institution cannot see which other courses the student has applied for;
- Responses come from UCAS and/or the universities and individual progress can be checked on the UCAS website.

MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT COURSES

- After careful consideration students can apply for up to FIVE courses;
- Those students applying for medicine or dentistry are required to use no more than four choices for these courses They may add another course if they wish.

Applications should be made bearing in mind:

- a) The subject to be studied
- b) The universities preferred
- c) The grade requirements for the course and the A Level grades predicted by the teaching staff. These will be released to students in the summer term of Year 12.

The grade requirements may be found from university web sites, the UCAS website and on UNIFROG, a search tool we have bought in for students to use when researching post-18 options.

We are frequently asked what is the **best** university for a particular subject. Undoubtedly some institutions have reputations for excellence in particular areas, but these can vary greatly within a small

space of time. We recommend thorough research by the individual student to find the best course and institution for him or her.

Grade requirements reflect the competition to get into a course **not** necessarily the quality or difficulty of the course.

Research should include:-

- Consulting prospectuses – hard copies are easily available when requested from universities and published digitally on their websites;
- Visiting institutions on Open Days. Dates may be found from posters and on university websites. However, since attendance at Open Days does have considerable impact on work missed, we would recommend a total of **no more than three Open Days during school time** in Year 12/13. Term 6 of Year 12 is a good time to go. Visits **are** possible at other times by arrangement. We recommend that students use the mid-term break, weekends and the summer holiday;
- Discussion with staff, friends, students already in Higher Education;

N.B. Once the application has been submitted, it is not easy (but it is possible) to alter the course applications that have been made.

THE OUTCOME OF THE APPLICATION

- These are made from each institution in their own time and this can vary enormously (e.g. an application in early September 2019 may not receive a final offer until May 2020);
- Conditional offers dependent on certain A Level grade requirements are sent via UCAS and sometimes also directly from the institution. Each student may keep **one firm** and **one insurance** offer. The firm offer should always be for the course the student really prefers - providing the requirements are realistic. The insurance offer is usually for lower grade requirements.
- Increasingly, universities are making conditional offers which they promise to convert to unconditional if the student makes them their firm choice. These are obviously incredibly tempting for students as, in essence, it means that the student's place at this university is guaranteed, irrespective of A Level grades achieved. We have two warnings to students here:
 - a) Don't be tempted to accept an unconditional offer if you don't really want to go to that university – make a positive choice and be reminded that if you accept an unconditional offer, that's the place you will have to go to unless you pull out of that year's UCAS cycle.
 - b) Even though you don't need your A Level grades for this university, you will be required to tell employers what you got at A Level. You may well get to your chosen university with moderate or even poor grades, but very few employers will ignore the fact that you didn't do well at A Level, even if you got to university.

- If students have any doubts about which offers to accept or reject they are strongly advised to consult Mr McDowell, Mr Twizell, Mr O'Neill or Mr Price;
- Students are given the date by which decisions must be made when they receive their final statement from UCAS.

RESULTS TIME

The A Level results are usually the third Thursday in August (just Google A Level results day to find out the specific date). It is strongly recommended that students take holidays before the results are expected so that they are available to deal personally with “clearing” if necessary.

1. If a student achieves the requirements of his/her first firm offer then he/she **must** take up that offer (sometimes the offer still stands even if the requirements are not quite achieved);
2. If the requirements for the first firm offer are not fulfilled but those for the insurance are achieved, then the student **must** accept that offer. If the student does not wish to accept either offer he/she must withdraw from UCAS and may re-apply the following year. It is not deemed possible to then enter clearing at this stage;

CLEARING is the procedure that takes place mainly in August and September to make available lists of vacancies for any student without a place at this time. Students will be given more information about this later.

GRANTS and AWARDS

- Information booklets advising parents on entitlements to financial assistance will be in schools by February/March 2020 and passed onto the students. It is then up to students and parents/guardians to apply online at www.gov.uk/student-finance-register-login in February/March 2020;
- It is the student's responsibility to complete the online form and send relevant information;
- Birth certificate, or passport (divorce papers etc. where relevant) must be sent with the application;
- It is the student's responsibility to return the completed form;

All further correspondence will be between Medway and the student and his/her parents.

We hope you find this information helpful and will be able to follow the applications procedure with your daughter or son. Students will be supported by tutors as well as the Head of Careers and the Sixth Form Management Team. If you need further advice please do not hesitate to contact the school on 01634 364 151 or email any of us:

- Mr M McDowell (Assistant Head Teacher and Head of 6th Form) at MMcDowell@rmgs.org.uk
- Mr P. O'Neill (Head of Year 13) at poneill@rmgs.org.uk
- Mr J Twizell (Head of Year 12) at jtwizell@rmgs.org.uk