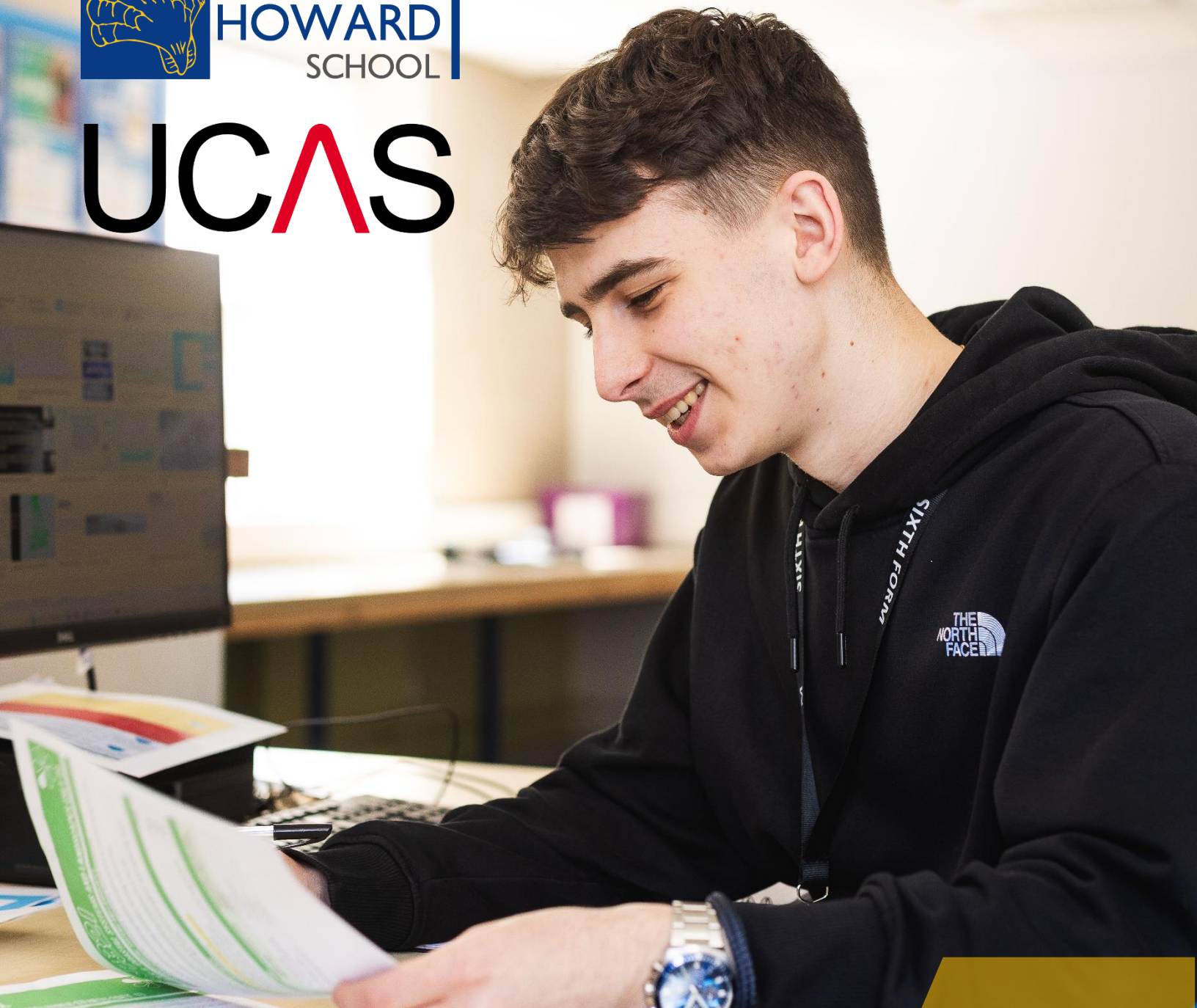


WILLIAM  
HOWARD  
SCHOOL

UCAS



# UCAS Application Guide

*Student and Staff Booklet*

SIXTH  
FORM

**This booklet is designed to support both students and staff throughout the UCAS application process.**

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## Introduction to UCAS

**The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is the organisation that manages applications to higher education courses in the UK.**

### Students can apply for:

- University degrees
- Degree apprenticeships
- Conservatoires
- Some foundation courses

### Through UCAS, students can:

- Apply to up to five courses
- Track their application progress
- Respond to offers
- Access student finance information

## Important UCAS terms

Term	Meaning
UCAS Hub	The online platform students use to complete applications
Personal Statement	A written section explaining why the student is suitable for the course
Reference	A recommendation written by school or college staff
Predicted Grades	Estimated grades teachers believe a student will achieve
Firm Choice	The student's first-choice university
Insurance Choice	Backup choice if firm conditions are not met
Clearing	Process for students to find university places after results day
Contextual Offer	Reduced grade offer based on individual circumstances

## UCAS Timeline

Month	Key Actions
Spring/ Summer Y12	Begin researching courses and careers
Summer Year 12	Start super-curricular activities and work experience
September Year 13	Begin UCAS application
October	Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary deadlines
January	Main UCAS deadline
February–May	Universities send offers
June	Reply to offers
August	Results Day and Clearing

## Creating a UCAS Account

### Step 1: Visit the UCAS website

Students should go to the official UCAS website and select:

- 'Undergraduate'
- 'Apply'
- 'Register'

### Step 2: create login details

Students will need:

- A personal email address
- A secure password
- Security questions

Important:

- Use a professional email address.
- Avoid using school email addresses if possible.
- Record login details safely.

### Step 3: verify email address

UCAS will send a verification email. Students must verify their account before continuing.

### Step 4: complete registration questions

Students will enter:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Nationality
- Residency status

## Linking Your Account to Your Centre

### Step 1: Select 'Link to Centre'

Within the UCAS application, students should choose: *Link your application to your school, college or centre.*

### Step 2: Enter the Buzzword

The school or college will provide a unique buzzword.

Important:

- Buzzwords change yearly.
- Students must enter it exactly as provided (**WILLIAMHOWARD**)

### Step 3: Confirm Centre Details

Students should check:

- School/college name
- Application group (if applicable)

Once linked:

- Staff can monitor progress.
- Teachers can add predicted grades and references.
- Students can receive internal support.

## Completing Personal Information

Personal Details:

- Full legal name
- Preferred name
- Date of birth
- Contact information

Residency Information

- Nationality
- Residency status
- Country of ordinary residence

## Student Support

Students may need:

- National Insurance Number
- Student Finance information

Additional Information

Some students may need to declare:

- Criminal convictions
- Care experience
- Individual support needs
- Disabilities or learning differences

## Education & Qualifications Section

### Students must include all qualifications:

- GCSE qualifications
- BTEC qualifications
- A Levels
- Other qualifications

### Students should:

- Check qualification titles carefully
- Include completed and pending qualifications
- Enter exact grades where known

### Predicted Grades

Teachers will usually add predicted grades through the centre.

## Employment History Section

### Students should include:

- Part-time jobs
- Paid work
- Relevant employment

### Include:

- Employer name
- Job title
- Dates of employment

### This section can demonstrate:

- Responsibility
- Teamwork
- Communication skills
- Time management

Students do not need to include every small job.



## Student Finance and Support

### Students can apply for:

- Tuition fee loans
- Maintenance loans
- Grants or bursaries

### Students should research:

- Student Finance England
- University bursaries
- Scholarship opportunities

### Staff should encourage students to:

- Apply early
- Understand repayment systems
- Compare accommodation costs

## Writing Your Personal Statement

### The personal statement allows students to explain:

- Why they want to study the course
- Why they are suitable
- What experiences have prepared them

### The new UCAS personal statement format uses three structured sections.

### Students should:

- Be reflective
- Use evidence and examples
- Avoid listing activities without explanation
- Focus on academic interest and motivation

### Recommended writing process:

1. Mind map ideas
2. Gather evidence and examples
3. Draft each section separately
4. Edit and refine
5. Check spelling and grammar carefully

# Understanding the Three Personal Statement Sections

## Section 1: Why Do You Want to Study This Course or Subject?

### Students should explain:

- What sparked their interest
- Why they enjoy the subject
- How their interests developed
- What motivates them

### Good evidence includes:

- Books
- Articles
- Podcasts
- Lectures
- Current affairs
- EPQ topics
- Subject competitions

### Useful Sentence Starters

- “My interest in... developed when...”
- “I became fascinated by...”
- “Through reading... I discovered...”
- “A key issue that interests me is...”

### Example Reflection

Instead of: “I read a book about psychology.”

Write: “Reading Oliver Sacks’ work on neurological disorders developed my interest in how psychology and biology interact to shape behaviour.”

## Section 2: How Have Your Qualifications and Studies Helped You to Prepare For this Course or Subject?

### Students should discuss:

- A-Level subjects
- Coursework
- Practical work
- EPQ
- Independent study
- Academic skills

### Students should explain:

- Skills developed
- Knowledge gained
- Connections between subjects

### Skills Universities Value

- Research
- Analysis
- Communication
- Critical thinking
- Problem-solving
- Organisation
- Independent learning

### Example Reflection

“In Biology, I developed analytical skills through practical investigations and data analysis, strengthening my ability to evaluate evidence critically.”

## Section 3: What Else Have You Done to Prepare Outside Education and Why are these Experiences Helpful?

### This section includes:

- Super-curricular activities
- Extra-curricular activities
- Work experience
- Volunteering
- Leadership roles

### Students should focus on:

- Reflection
- Skills gained
- Relevance to the course

Avoid simply listing activities:

### Instead of:

“I completed work experience at a hospital.”

### Change to:

“During my hospital work experience, I observed the importance of communication and teamwork in patient care, reinforcing my interest in medicine.”

## Super-Curricular Activities

### What are Super-Curricular Activities?

Super-curricular activities are activities that go beyond the classroom and deepen understanding of a subject.

They are directly linked to academic interest.

**Universities value super-curricular activities highly because they show:**

- Curiosity
- Independent learning
- Academic motivation
- Commitment to the subject

### Examples of Super-Curricular Activities

#### Reading

- Academic books
- Journals
- Articles
- Research papers

#### Listening and Watching

- Podcasts
- TED Talks
- Documentaries
- University lectures

#### Courses and competitions

- MOOCs
- Summer schools
- Essay competitions
- Subject Olympiads

#### Research and Projects

- EPQ
- Independent investigations
- Subject projects
- Research tasks

#### Visiting and Engaging

- Museums
- University open days
- Public lectures
- Conferences

## Reflecting Effectively

### Students should explain:

- What they learned
- What challenged them
- How it changed their thinking
- Why it increased their interest

## Extra-Curricular Activities

### What Are Extra-Curricular Activities?

Extra-curricular activities happen outside normal studies and may not directly link to the course.

These activities can still demonstrate valuable transferable skills.

#### Examples

- Sports teams
- Music
- Drama
- Duke of Edinburgh
- Student leadership
- Volunteering
- Clubs and societies
- Mentoring younger students

#### Skills Developed

Activity	Possible Skills
Sports	Teamwork, resilience, discipline
Music	Commitment, creativity, performance confidence
Drama	Communication, collaboration
Volunteering	Empathy, responsibility
Leadership	Organisation, initiative

#### Important Advice

Extra-curricular activities should support the application, not dominate it.

### Students should always connect experiences back to:

- Skills
- Personal growth
- Course relevance

## Work Experience and Professional Links

### Work experience can help students:

- Understand careers
- Develop professional skills
- Confirm career interests
- Build confidence

### In- Person Work Experience

- Placements
- Shadowing professionals
- Internships

### Virtual Work Experience

- Online insight programmes
- Employer webinars
- Interactive simulations

### Volunteering

- Care homes
- Charities
- Schools
- Community projects

### Reflective Questions

Students should ask themselves:

- What did I learn?
- What surprised me?
- What skills did I observe?
- How did this confirm my interest?

## Teacher and Staff Guidance

### Supporting Students Effectively

Staff should:

- Encourage early preparation
- Promote super-curricular engagement
- Provide constructive feedback
- Monitor deadlines carefully
- Support realistic course choices

### Reviewing Personal Statements

Staff should check:

- Clarity and structure
- Reflection and analysis
- Grammar and spelling
- Relevance to chosen courses
- Authentic student voice

### Supporting Student Wellbeing

UCAS can be stressful.

Staff should encourage:

- Organisation
- Time management
- Confidence-building
- Balanced applications



## Key Super-Curricular Ideas by Profession

Profession	Suggested Super-Curriculars	Useful Work Experience	Key Skills
<b>Medicine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical podcasts</li> <li>• BMJ articles</li> <li>• TED Talks on healthcare</li> <li>• Reading about ethics</li> <li>• MOOCs on anatomy or public health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospitals</li> <li>• Care homes</li> <li>• GP surgeries</li> <li>• Volunteering with vulnerable groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Resilience</li> <li>• Ethical awareness</li> </ul>
<b>Law</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading legal cases</li> <li>• Following current affairs</li> <li>• Watching court proceedings</li> <li>• Debate clubs</li> <li>• Law summer schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solicitors' firms</li> <li>• Courts</li> <li>• Citizens Advice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis</li> <li>• Argument</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Attention to detail</li> </ul>
<b>Engineering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engineering podcasts</li> <li>• STEM competitions</li> <li>• Coding projects</li> <li>• Robotics clubs</li> <li>• University lectures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engineering firms</li> <li>• Manufacturing</li> <li>• Technical workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem-solving</li> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Mathematical thinking</li> <li>• Design skills</li> </ul>
<b>Teaching and Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading educational research</li> <li>• Tutoring younger students</li> <li>• Education podcasts</li> <li>• Classroom observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary schools</li> <li>• Secondary schools</li> <li>• Youth groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Patience</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Organisation</li> </ul>
<b>Psychology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychology podcasts</li> <li>• Research articles</li> <li>• TED Talks</li> <li>• Reading case studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care settings</li> <li>• Youth work</li> <li>• SEN support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis</li> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Research skills</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul>
<b>Business and Economics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial news</li> <li>• Business podcasts</li> <li>• Economics essays</li> <li>• Enterprise competitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business placements</li> <li>• Retail</li> <li>• Customer service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numeracy</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Commercial awareness</li> </ul>

## Common Mistakes to Avoid

### Application errors

- Missing deadlines
- Incorrect qualification details
- Personal email mistakes
- Incomplete sections

### Personal Statement Errors

- Listing instead of reflecting
- Overusing quotes
- Clichés
- Spelling mistakes
- Lack of subject focus

### Course Choice Errors

- Applying without research
- Choosing unsuitable courses
- Ignoring entry requirements

## Final UCAS Checklist

### Before Submitting

#### Students Should Check:

- Personal details are correct
- Qualifications are accurate
- Course choices are confirmed
- Personal statement is proofread
- Employment history is complete
- Application is linked to the centre

#### Staff Should Check:

- Predicted grades
- Reference quality
- Internal deadlines met
- Student readiness

## Useful Links and Resources

### UCAS Resources

- UCAS Hub
- UCAS Undergraduate Search
- UCAS Personal Statement Support
- UCAS Subject Guides

### Super-Curricular Resources

- TED Talks
- FutureLearn
- Springpod
- BBC Sounds Podcasts
- MOOC platforms

### Careers Support

- National Careers Service
- Prospects
- Unifrog
- Apprenticeship websites

## Final Thoughts

**A successful UCAS application is built over time.**

Students should:

- Explore their interests
- Engage in super-curricular activities
- Reflect on experiences
- Seek feedback regularly
- Stay organised

Staff and students working together can create strong, thoughtful and competitive applications.

Good luck with your UCAS journey!