



MAYFLOWER HIGH SCHOOL

Sixth Form

**Parents' Guide to
Higher Education**

For September 2021 Entry

Dear Parents / Carers,

We have compiled this booklet specifically for parents and carers to give a helpful insight into the Higher Education application process. We have put the advice into sections to support the common questions adults may face...

Section	Key Question	Pages
1	How can I help my child choose the right university subject and course?	3 – 4
2	How can I help my child choose the right university?	5 – 9
3	How can I help my child with their application?	10
4	What are the main ‘technical’ aspects (such as finances) that I should know?	11 – 13

Alongside this parental booklet, your son/daughter has been issued with a student booklet that has been designed to support him/her through the application process.

Please ask to see it and help them to work through it.

Should you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact Dr Fawell / Mr Ekers.

Yours sincerely

Dr S Fawell
Assistant Headteacher: Head of
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Mr C Ekers
Head of Year 12

Section 1 – Which Subject / Which Course?

Choosing a subject to study can be very difficult. If your son/daughter is unsure which subject to study, they should visit the UCAS website and choose the “choosing a course” tab. Your son/daughter may also have already completed “*My Uni Choice*” (a survey we offered to all students) and this may provide some insight into their strengths, weaknesses and preferences.

Once your son/daughter has identified one or more subjects that he/she would consider studying, the next step is to choose a course that draws on the subject(s). This stage of the process can be exciting, because there is a lot more choice for higher education students than just core subjects: he/she may discover courses they never knew existed (for example, Agronomy or Brewing or Events Management or Urban Planning & Development or Materials Science or Yacht Design – as opposed to simply Design and Technology as a whole).

What qualifications are available?

When people consider higher education, they tend to think of degree courses, but there are more qualifications to be gained at university or college. The usual courses provided are:

1. Certificate of Higher Education: the first year of a degree course
2. Higher National Diploma: a two-year course, which, if completed with high grades, can lead to the third year of a degree
3. Foundation Degree: a two-year course for vocational subjects, starting at 'year 0', which prepares a student for a degree
4. First Degree: a three- or four-year course where graduates obtain a bachelor's degree
5. Postgraduate: courses for graduates which can be one/two years after a degree where you gain a master's degree, or longer for specialist degrees, e.g. graduate entry to medicine/PhD

What about studying two subjects?

If your son/daughter wishes to study more than one subject, for example, Economics and Accountancy, he/she may be able to combine the subjects into one qualification. It does depend upon where he/she chooses to study, as not all institutions are as flexible as others.

What is a Sandwich course?

Certain courses require the student to spend a year in industry, working that year as part of the course. This will usually be for the third year of a degree course or the second year of an HND and, depending on the employer, may be full-time paid employment. The purpose of this is to introduce students to the world of work, whilst gaining valuable experience in a profession they might consider after completing their higher education course.

What about Languages courses?

With some four-year language courses, students study abroad in their third year. The focus of the year abroad is to learn the language of another country in that country. The year is usually spent either working in a school teaching English or studying in a university. The student is assigned to a teacher who would help him/her throughout the year. If studying two languages, it may be possible to spend six months in each of the two different countries.

What is the UCAS course search tool?

A list of available courses is on the UCAS website (www.ucas.com): your son/daughter can choose to search by subject, qualification, location, institution and other specific options.

This search tool provides many details including general information about the course, entry requirements, course codes and institution details with links to the institution's website.

It can also provide information on bursaries and scholarships available for that course and/or institution.

Use the space below to make notes on the above if you choose

Section 2 – Which University?

With over 160 higher education institutions offering over 50,000 courses, the choice of what to study and where, is not an easy one. The following brief guide is intended to give you and your son / daughter a strategy for searching, sifting and choosing.

What are league tables based on?

- 1. Entry Standards/Qualifications - The average number of UCAS points held by first-year students*
- 2. Teaching Quality Assessment - The marks received in teaching assessments by individual departments*
- 3. Research Assessment - The research rating received by each department (more relevant to postgraduate study)*
- 4. Teaching - The marks received in teaching assessments by individual departments*
- 5. Student/Staff Ratio - On average the number of staff in relation to the number of students*
- 6. Degree Classifications - 1sts & 2nds as a percentage of degrees*
- 7. Graduate destinations - The percentage of graduates entering full-time employment (may also include universities targeted by graduate recruiters)*
- 8. Drop Out Rate: The percentage of students failing to complete courses*
- 9. Spend Per Student - Library and computer spending, facilities spending*
- 10. Value Added Score - Whether students with lower grades on entry to university go on to get good degrees.*
- 11. Inclusiveness - How well an institution, at subject level, attracts students from under-represented groups.*

Your son/daughter therefore needs to ensure that the league tables they use are based on the criteria that are most important to them in their choice of institution.

Examples of league tables

1. The Guardian University League Table

This table uses the following data:

% Satisfied with course, % Satisfied with teaching

% Satisfied with feedback

Student: Staff Ratio (SSR)

Value Added Score Career after six months

Average entry tariff Spend per students

This data is then weighted to build-up a final score to show how the Guardian ranks the student experience. Note that research funding is not included as the ranking is aimed at undergraduates.

2. The Complete University Guide

This table uses the following data:

Entry Standards

Student Satisfaction

Research Quality

Graduate Prospects

More detailed information is available by clicking the 'profile' and 'courses' tabs.

Do's and Don'ts

Don't just use the tables. League tables alone will not guarantee that the best or most suitable university is chosen. There is no "quick" way to choose a course and university. To get it right, time and energy need to be spent in finding out as much as possible from a range of sources.

"To get the full picture, go to open days, talk to students and teachers, read prospectuses".

What makes a good university?

Most parents want their child to go to a 'good university' and to do a 'good course'. The following section might help you support your son/daughter in making an informed choice about what to study and where.

Does a reputation really matter?

Despite there being no such thing as the 'best' university, some institutions and courses are perceived as being of higher quality than others.

Over the years, university departments change as does the quality of courses on offer. Nobody wants to make a choice of university based on what might be an outdated or highly subjective view of the university, so how can you compare institutions and courses?

One piece of advice is to look at the course in detail, rather than the institution as a whole.

One institution may be highly regarded by industry for producing high quality engineers but may not be the best place to study English. Even institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge do not have a monopoly of the most highly regarded courses.

What are Russell Group universities?

There are 24 Russell Group universities. These universities have a strong, research base and aim to deliver the best research and an outstanding teaching and learning experience. They are often considered as the 'elite' universities. They have higher than average student satisfaction and many members of staff will be actively involved in research. For a list of the Russell Group universities and their facilitating subjects please www.russellgroup.ac.uk.

Other Useful Websites?

www.ucas.com

www.whatuni.com

<https://unistats.ac.uk/>

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

What other key factors need to be considered?

1. Quality

Institutions are reviewed periodically by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Reports of these reviews can be found on the Quality Assurance website (www.qaa.ac.uk).

2. Employability: will my child get a job at the end of the course?

Each higher education institution is required to collect statistics of students' destinations six months after they graduate. The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey should be available from individual university departments. As well as looking at the percentage of students in employment, it is also worth considering the range and level of jobs that students have gone into.

3. Course content: what does the course actually cover?

Not all degree courses are the same, even if their titles appear similar. Look carefully at course descriptions to find out about the content of the degree course. How is the course structured? Does it allow the study of subjects your son/daughter is interested in? Does it include work experience if relevant? How is the course assessed?

4. Accreditation: is the course worth more than a degree?

Some courses (in particular vocational ones) are accredited by professional bodies such as the Engineering Council or the British Psychological Society. Where relevant, check with the individual institution to find out if the course is accredited or offers any exemption from professional exams *etc.* A common area of misunderstanding is joint courses e.g. Forensic Science and *one other subject*; many of these are not recognised by professional bodies.

5. Degree discipline: does degree discipline matter?

Some careers do require the study of a specific degree, e.g. medicine and architecture. If your son/daughter has a specific career in mind encourage him/her to research the most appropriate course of study. However, most graduate vacancies are for graduates from any degree discipline. If they are committed and interested in their subject of study, they are much more likely to get a better final degree result.

6. Social factors

It is easy to forget, faced with league tables and teaching quality reports, that non-academic and social factors such as the location of the institution as well as its size and facilities, are equally important considerations in making the right choice. Nobody wants their child to spend three or four years living and studying in a place that is simply not right for them. **Encourage your son/daughter to visit universities so that they can make a truly informed decision.**

Many of the above factors form the basis of university league tables published in the press. Although they do need to be treated with some caution, they do provide a good starting point for selecting courses and institutions.

Use the space below to make notes on the above if you choose

Section 3 – How can I help with his/her application?

Encourage your son/daughter to:

1. Read prospectuses and course leaflets (Prospectuses are available online and are often free to request from universities).
2. Attend Open Days and go with them if you wish. The school will allow students to attend two open days during school hours; most universities hold open days at weekends.
3. Visit university web sites. Look at them together.
4. Visit the UCAS web site (www.ucas.com).
5. Carefully check entrance requirements for courses in which he/she is interested.
6. Talk to subject teachers and to sixth form tutors for advice.
7. Telephone institutions with specific queries if you are unsure about anything.
8. Work on his/her personal statement (see student booklet for examples)
9. Prepare a folder in which to keep everything.
10. Investigate whether their university of interest requires essays/samples of work. Encourage your son/daughter to discuss the possibilities of this with his/her teachers so that he/she is prepared.

Perhaps the best piece of advice I can give is be involved, proactive and engaged.

If you take time, trouble and care then you are much more likely to make a wise and appropriate choice.

Section 4 – What ‘Technical Points’ should I know?

Online applications

Applications are made electronically. Students need to register online. Up to five choices can be made (up to four for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science) and students can make more than one application to the same university if they wish. Applications are submitted ‘blind’ and no attempt can be made to indicate a preference. UCAS charges vary year to year but the cost for 2019 entry was £24 (or £13 if only one choice was made) and this payment can be made via credit or debit card on-line.

UCAS Tariff

The UCAS Tariff is a ‘scoring’ system for entry into Higher Education. Under the UCAS Tariff system, grades at BTEC, AS and A Level will be given ‘scores’. These are as follows:

AS Level Grade	UCAS Tariff Score	EPQ Grade	UCAS Tariff Score	A Level Grade	UCAS Tariff Score	Level 3 BTEC Diploma in Business	UCAS Tariff Score	Level 3 BTEC Subsidiary Diploma	UCAS Tariff Score
A	20	A*	28	A*	56	D*D*	112	D*	56
B	16	A	24	A	48	D*D	104	D	48
C	12	B	20	B	40	DD	96	M	32
D	10	C	16	C	32	DM	80	P	16
E	6	D	12	D	24	MM	64		
		E	8	E	16	MP	48		
						PP	32		

N.B Please note that this is a new tariff and will differ to that of siblings who are three academic years older

Oxford and Cambridge (so-called Oxbridge)

The Oxbridge initial deadline is Friday 18 September 2020. Students apply through UCAS in the normal way.

Oxford

Oxford have a greater emphasis on short-listing candidates prior to interview. Seventy percent of those who apply will be expected to undertake an admissions test in advance of short-listing candidates for interview. For guidance, go to www.ox.ac.uk/admissions. Oxford reviewed their entrance requirements in 2012 and offers usually now include one or more A* grades.

Cambridge

Applicants will need to submit a Supplementary Application Questionnaire (SAQ) by 22 October 2019. Over eighty percent of Cambridge applicants are interviewed. Since 2010 Cambridge have included the A* grade in an increasing number of its conditional offers. Applicants in some subjects are required to sit additional tests. For further details visit:

www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/admissions-assessments

Specialist Exams

For certain courses, in some universities, specialist entrance exams need will to be taken. Students will need to research these on the individual university websites or in the prospectus. Common examples are LNAT for Law and UKCAT/BMAT for medicine/dentistry/veterinary science.

Your son/daughter will need to see Dr Fawell if any of the above apply.

Special circumstances/special consideration/additional information

UCAS will only process the application form and deal with general application matters. However, additional information relevant to an application can be sent direct to the universities. We routinely advise universities of all manner of information that has a bearing on applications. If there is any information that you consider has a bearing on your son's/daughter's application (either before he/she makes it or afterwards), please let us know.

Student Finance

This is administered by Student Finance England. Application for student finance is now an online service at **www.gov.uk/student-finance**. The site gives full details of what is available and the online calculator will work out available finance according to individual circumstances. Students should apply for student finance as soon as possible in March/April 2021 and should not wait until their A Level results are out. The closing date for student loan payments to be processed in time for the start of the term for 2021 entry is approximately end of May 2020. Students can apply for a student loan up to 9 months after the start of their course. The website mentioned above provides information on all aspects of student finance.

However, if you need further help and guidance the telephone for Student Finance England is 0300 100 0607.

Additional Notes / Comments / Questions Page