



Aldenham
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The Aldenham Approach to University Applications

2018





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At Aldenham, we are dedicated to ensuring that all students take great care in selecting universities and courses. These are decisions that will affect the rest of their lives and therefore great care and attention is needed to get these all-important decisions right. We have outlined below the 'Aldenham approach' to university applications. Whilst this advice is specifically geared towards those applying to UK universities through UCAS, much of it is also pertinent for those applying to overseas institutions.

Anyone considering applying to study abroad must make sure they have spoken to Mr Kerslake or Mrs Evagora.

Predicted grades

- Grade predictions are made by the Heads of Department. These grades have to be based on evidence from:

- the Year 12 mocks;
- regular tests and assignments throughout the A Level courses; and
- the student's GCSE grades.

- The door will remain ajar for students to improve upon their predicted grades. Departments will give students further opportunities with internal exams/tests at the start of September. This also ensures that the summer holidays are productive with students revising their Year 12 work for their linear A Levels.

Choices

- Students are encouraged to apply for appropriate courses and to apply to a sensible range of universities for their **five** choices. The five university choices are not ranked from 1 to 5 at the point of application.

- Students are generally encouraged to apply to one 'aspirational' choice that may be just above their predicted grades, three that are identical to their predicted grades and one that is lower. An example would be a student predicted BBB may apply to one course that requires ABB, three that require BBB and one that requires BBC. This may not always be the case and can be dependent on the academic capabilities of the student and the type of course they have chosen.

- Once offers are received from the universities, students should choose a firm and insurance choice. The insurance choice serves as a 'safety net' if students do not get the grades to get into their first choice. Clearing will serve as a further safety net.

- Choices must be **aspirational** and **realistic** and **the insurance choice should be lower than the first choice**.

- Students should be prepared to go to their insurance choice – the selection for this needs to be as careful as their firm choice.



References

- Before a reference is written, Tutors and Housemasters/mistresses will discuss with students which courses they are applying for. Tutors and Housemasters/mistresses will make sure they are aware of all of the students' achievements beyond the classroom. Students should reflect at this stage on the extent to which they have taken advantage of the opportunities here at Aldenham. Students may need to 'raise their game' and increase their involvement in the coming months in order to enhance their reference and personal statement.

- Subject references are written by subject specialists and the overall reference is put together by the students' Tutors and Housemasters/mistresses. The achievements of the students inside and outside of School will be noted, along with their key character strengths. References are then checked not just by the School's UCAS advisers but also by the Headmaster before they are sent.

- Students are also allowed to read their references before they are sent. We believe that students are in the best position to check if anything has been missed. Aldenham students are invariably pleased with their references and the way in which they have been 'sold' by the School.

Personal statements

- For students, producing their personal statement will be about 90% of their work in the UCAS process and, as such, students need to put a huge amount of work into it to get it right.

- To compete favourably against other applicants, students need to demonstrate passion and understanding of their chosen subject and courses. This includes an awareness of what the degree will be like, its content and assessment style.

- Students should only begin writing their personal statement when they are certain which subject or subjects they want to go on and study at university.

- Selling yourself on paper can be harder than selling yourself in person. It is a life skill and knowing how to do this will help our students get job interviews in the future.

- It takes on average five attempts to get right.

- It is 47 lines.

- Students should enlist the help of their Tutors and, more importantly, their subject leaders. Their Housemaster/mistress will also be on hand to help. The School's UCAS advisers will provide the most feedback and put in a lot of time to ensure each statement is impressive.

Deadlines

- Students should complete the first draft of their personal statement over the summer holidays.

- We will get students logged into the online UCAS system within the first week back in September 2018.

- Those who are applying for Oxbridge or to become a dentist, vet or medic have a deadline of **15 October 2018** to complete their UCAS application. Other universities/courses have a deadline of **15 January 2019**.

- All of our students are encouraged to get their application sent off by October half term so that, from then onwards, they can focus solely on achieving the grades needed to get into their first choice university.

The summer term and holidays

- During the summer term our careers sessions are devoted to post-18 planning, covering: the UCAS application; gap year possibilities; student finance; and framing the all-important personal statement.

- Students should read the guidebooks and prospectuses in the Careers Library, visit the UCAS website and talk to the School's UCAS advisors. Thorough research into universities and courses has to be done this term so that a final shortlist can be made during the summer.

- A list of university open days is available online, on the UCAS website and in the Careers Library. We recommend students visit universities of interest to them before September.

- The students' section of the school portal has lots of guidance available. The parents' section of the portal now also has excellent links for careers and UCAS which we hope you find helpful.

- Students should complete the first draft of their personal statement over the summer holidays.

UCAS 2018 –Timetable of events and deadlines

19 April 2018	Excel Higher Education Exhibition, London.
26 April 2018	Higher Education Forum, Aldenham School.
May 2018	UCAS goes live.
May/June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on possible courses and where they are offered. • Talk to teachers about performance and possible courses. • Look at reference books and videos. • Talk to friends who are currently students. • Visit universities.
June/July/August 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-list of institutions. • Study university prospectuses. • Complete first draft of personal statement.
September/October 2018	Attend Open Days.
15 October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early applications, including Oxbridge and medicine, must reach UCAS. • This is also the deadline for the Cambridge Preliminary applications Form (PAF) and the Oxford Application Form.
5 October 2018	Deadline for UCAS forms to be received by the Head of UCAS.
19 October 2018	UCAS applications to be submitted.
November 2018	Law (LNAT) & Medicine (BMAT) tests to be taken, usually during half term.
November onwards	Interviews and decisions from UCAS institutions.
15 January 2019	Deadline for UCAS applications.
New Year onwards	Confirm with UCAS which are firm and which are insurance offers.
	N.B. The process cannot be completed until all offers have been received from UCAS.
Spring – March/April	Apply online through Student Finance England for loans/grants.
	Apply for university accommodation.
Summer	Take examinations and wait for results.
August	Results published.

Final decisions from UCAS institutions by end of August.

If not successful, consult School or careers office regarding the Clearing process.



A LEVEL GRADES and UCAS POINTS

GRADE	UCAS POINTS
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

After submitting the UCAS form, what happens next?

Applicants should make a careful note of their UCAS number. Any correspondence with either UCAS or an individual institution will require this UCAS number.

If an institution makes an offer it will be one of the following:

(i) **Unconditional Offer**

This may or may not be dependent on the applicant selecting this as their first choice.

(ii) **Conditional Offer (most common)**

This may be through a Grades or Points offer.

Applicants may hold **TWO** offers in the UCAS scheme:

- The first, a **Firm** acceptance is the one they want most;
- The other, an **Insurance** acceptance, should be a course which they would still be happy to follow (if they do not get the grades required for a Firm). They cannot break the insurance commitment in order to enter Clearing (unless the university agrees to release them).

When considering whether or not to accept particular offers applicants need to bear the following points in mind:

- A points offer is easier to achieve than an offer consisting of grades;
- Take careful note of which grades are required in each subject; and
- They cannot change their mind once they have made a decision.



Applicants will be notified of the date by which they must reply to offers from the different institutions.

Applicants cannot reply to any offers until they have received their last decision from UCAS. There is no mechanism for applicants to make replies until they have received a 'Statement of Decisions' letter, in which all of their offers will be summarised to them by UCAS.

If applicants hold no offers after receiving all decisions then they are eligible to enter Clearing in August/September. In the meantime they are entitled to contact an institution within UCAS directly and, if interested, they will request the applicant's UCAS form. The eventual offer, however, must be formalised through UCAS in Clearing.

The third Thursday in August is when A Level results will be available in school. **All students need to be available from this date onwards.** Successful students need to be available to confirm offers and possibly to sort out accommodation etc. If they are unsuccessful, they will need to be on hand to participate in the Clearing process.

Student Finance

After students have chosen their courses and are waiting for their offers they must start thinking about what financial help they need and can apply for.

Many students are worried about getting into debt at a young age. While it is wise to worry about debt, student finance can be a solution.

The main types of student finance are **tuition fee and maintenance loans** (which have to be paid back), and **grants and bursaries** which do not have to be paid back.

Students can apply for a Tuition Fee Loan of up to £9,250 to cover tuition fees, while Maintenance Loans and bursaries help towards living costs such as rent and bills. The amount of Maintenance Loan that students will be eligible for may depend on their household income, the type of course they are studying and where they live. The cost of living varies across universities depending on their geographical location, with London-based universities often costing more. There are several types of grants, bursaries and scholarships that students can apply for so it is worth researching it.

Repayment

Repayment of student loans is based on paying 9% of the income above a set minimum level of earnings. In April 2017, the minimum level of earnings threshold was frozen at £21,000 until 2021 for those who study in the UK. This means

that individuals who earn less than this amount after graduation do not have to repay their student loan until their earnings meet this threshold.

For example, if an individual was earning £30,000 per year:

1. £30,000 – £21,000 before tax = £9,000
2. 9% of 9,000 = £810
3. £810 / 12 months = £67.50 per month
4. Rounded down the monthly student loan repayment would be **£67 per month on that level of salary until the loan is paid off.**

Currently in England and Wales, the student loan is cancelled 30 years after individuals become eligible to repay.

When to apply

To ensure that students get their money by the start of term they need to meet the deadline (May 2019).

If their application is late, their money might be too. Students need to make sure they have got their applications in by the deadline so they are not left short at the start of term.

Students should apply online with their passport number and send requested evidence as quickly as possible. They should also ensure that their parents or sponsors complete their financial information to get their application completed by the relevant deadlines.



Gap Year

Many students choose to take a gap year before starting their next phase in life. The purpose of the gap year might be to take time out to consider future goals or simply to undertake an activity that the individual feels they will not have time to do later after commencing university.

It is important that the gap year is planned and well-researched in order to benefit from the experience. An effective gap year experience is something that has relevance to the individual's considered career option, or an experience which demonstrates certain traits and characteristics in an individual which universities and employers would see as beneficial.

Many students choose to volunteer abroad for an organisation. However many gap year jobs are paid.

Students taking a gap year could:

- Develop transferable skills;
- Raise cultural awareness;
- Increase confidence and independence;
- Learn a new craft;
- Increase work experience and boost CVs; and
- Improve language skills.

More information can be found here: www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/gap-year/should-i-take-a-gap-year

Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

The Careers programme is delivered through the following areas:

a) UCAS/university guidance and support

All students will be shown how to register with UCAS and will be supported through the entire process. We recognise that some students will choose a different path, such as apprenticeships or employment, but we feel it is important to offer all students the option of attending university. Throughout the UCAS process, students will be shown how to write personal statements, will visit universities for open days, will be involved in in-house university workshops, talks and discussions and will be provided with impartial advice.



b) Apprenticeship guidance and support

Just as all students are offered advice on how to attend universities, we feel that it is important to provide students with alternative options. Students have the opportunity to attend apprenticeship days and to receive advice from external speakers. There is more information on apprenticeships in the next section.

c) CV writing and interview preparation

All students have been provided with guidance and support on how to write a good CV and how to prepare themselves for interviews. In Year 13, students will have the opportunity to practice their interview skills during an interview workshop with external interviewers from various businesses.

d) Work experience

All Year 12 students should participate in work experience. This should be for approximately five days and students are responsible for organising this but Mrs Tekin is available to help them to make arrangements. It is recommended that this takes place during the summer holiday before they start Year 13.

Apprenticeships

Some students may decide that, instead of going to university, they are interested in starting work whilst learning skills and gaining a qualification. If this is something they are considering, then an apprenticeship could be the right option. During an apprenticeship, students study for qualifications while working and learning the skills they need for the job they are doing.

To start an apprenticeship the student must be 16 or over, eligible to work in the UK and not in full-time education. Some apprenticeships are available to those with a reasonable set of GCSE grades, whilst others are only on offer to those with A Levels.

How does it work?

Apprenticeship training can take between one and five years to complete, but the length of an apprenticeship depends on its level, the industry in question and the skills the apprentice already has.

Training takes place in the workplace and they will also spend some time at a local college or another learning provider. Apprentices are taken on directly by employers and work alongside other employees.

These are real jobs (like any other non-apprenticeship job) so students have to apply to an employer and compete against other applicants. Entry requirements vary depending on the level of the apprenticeship and the nature of the job.

There are three levels of apprenticeship available. The level a student starts at would depend on their qualifications and the opportunities available in the sector they are interested in.

- **Intermediate Apprenticeship** (Level 2; equivalent to five good GCSE passes): provides apprentices with the skills and qualifications for their chosen career and allow entry (if desired) to an Advanced Apprenticeship. To be accepted students will need to be enthusiastic, keen to learn and have a reasonable standard of education.

- **Advanced Apprenticeship** (Level 3; equivalent to two A-level passes): to start this programme, some

industries will require particular GCSEs. Some may ask for previous experience in the industry or for them to have completed an Intermediate Apprenticeship.

- **Higher Apprenticeship** (Level 4/5/6/7; equivalent to a Foundation Degree and above): entry requirements include at least five GCSEs grades A* – C. Most will also expect or require applicants to have subject knowledge related to the particular apprenticeship, for example through A Levels or an Advanced Apprenticeship.

Sectors

Apprenticeship opportunities exist in a wide range of sectors and are offered by both large national companies (such as Google, Sainsbury's, the BBC, Unilever and BMW) and also smaller, local companies.

Qualifications

Assessment at the end of an apprenticeship will test the skills, knowledge and behaviours of the apprentice to see if they are fully competent in their role.

Pay

From April 2018, all apprentices under 19, or over 19 and in their first year of an apprenticeship, are paid a minimum of £3.70 per hour and will receive this for the time they spend working, plus the time spent training. After completing the first year of the apprenticeship (and once the apprentice is over 19) they are entitled to the national minimum wage for their age.

Apprentices must work at least 30 hours (but not more than 40 hours) a week with 20% of this time being spent on achieving their qualification. Additional (non waged) time will also be required for them to complete the apprenticeship qualification in a timely manner.

However, it is important to understand that there are big variations in the actual salaries paid depending on the industry sector, the geographical region and the skill level of the apprenticeship concerned. There is also a long-standing problem with apprentices not being paid the minimum rate they should by many employers.

Useful websites

University and higher education

www.ucas.com

www.gov.uk/recognised-uk-degrees

www.opendays.com

www.gov.uk/browse/education/universities-higher-education

Student finance

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-online-for-student-finance>

<https://www.gov.uk/studentfinancesteps>

<http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/>

<http://www.studentfinance.direct.gov.uk/>

<http://www.slc.co.uk/>

<http://www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/student-finance/undergraduate-student-finance#cost>

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/finance-and-support/budget-calculator>

<http://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/supporting-materials/>

Apprenticeships and careers

www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide

www.gov.uk/browse/education/find-course

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

www.prospects.ac.uk

Gap years

www.gapyear.com

www.realgap.co.uk

www.lattitude.org.uk

www.etrust.org.uk







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