



September 2014

Applying for University: A Parents' Guide

Introduction

University applications take time; time to choose the right course and the right University. This document contains information on how the process works and provides important dates and decisions that your daughters will need to take. Research needs to be carried out and decisions made by the girls themselves. There is a lot of support within School to help them navigate their way through the mountain of information available and of course they will also discuss this with you at home.

GCSEs, AS and A2 grades

Universities base their decisions on a number of factors when making their offers. This part of the document deals with public examinations.

GCSE

Competitive courses and Universities can use GCSE grades to sift through applicants. In some extreme cases (such as Economics at LSE) eight or nine A* grades are the norm. Clearly, good performance at GCSE improves the chance of a successful application for competitive Universities and courses.

AS

AS varies in that some subjects have two modules with a maximum mark of 200 UMS (Unified Mark Scheme, designed to ensure uniformity and transparency across all modules and subjects) and others have three modules with a maximum of 300 UMS. The boundaries for two module subjects at AS are:

Grade A: 160 Grade B: 140 Grade C: 120 Grade D: 100 Grade E: 80

No A* are awarded at AS.

Subjects (Maths and sciences) with three modules have the following boundaries:

Grade A: 240 Grade B: 210 Grade C: 180 Grade D: 150 Grade E: 120

In August when results are published, the Statement of results will indicate the module grade (lower case letter), the AS overall grade (upper case letter), the UMS score for each module and the overall UMS score for the AS subject.

A2

Most girls drop one AS subject on commencing UVI Form, so therefore complete three full A2 subjects. At A2 there are a further two or three modules, depending on subject. The weighting of AS

and A2 modules are the same and therefore the weighting of AS and A2 are equal. As a result, grade boundaries are doubled.

Two module subjects:

Grade A: 320 Grade B: 280 Grade C: 240 Grade D: 200 Grade E: 160

Three module subjects:

Grade A: 480 Grade B: 420 Grade C: 360 Grade D: 300 Grade E: 240

At A2 an additional A* grade is introduced. To achieve an A*, girls must:

1. Achieve 80% in her aggregate A2 and AS UMS (320 or 480)
2. Achieve a total of 90% or more in her A2 modules

Key timings for applications

The UCAS process begins at the end of the LVI Form Summer term and research of courses and Universities should have continued during the summer holiday. Once courses and Universities have been selected and the personal statement has been completed, the whole application is discussed and checked before being sent electronically to UCAS. The aim is to have applications completed by half-term, but we do also appreciate that for some girls in different circumstances a later application is a more appropriate course of action.

Once the application is made, girls can track their progress through UCAS Track. Decisions from Universities gradually come in and the process is completed by early May, when the girls need to decide on one Firm offer and an Insurance offer, conditional on the outcome of their A2 examinations.

UCAS Track will confirm whether the offer has been confirmed once results are published in August. If this is not the case, girls are automatically put into Clearing. Advice will be available from school and details about Clearing will be given to the girls in the summer term.

Choosing when to apply

Applications are made during the Michaelmas term for the following Michaelmas or can be deferred for a year. It is also possible to apply after A2 results by making a Post Qualification Application. (See PQA Applications below).

Advice concerning when to apply can be sought from tutors, the Director of Studies, the Director of Sixth Form or Head of Careers. The issue is a complex one and Universities take different views about deferred entry/PQA. The best advice is for girls to contact Admissions Tutors of the Universities with which they are interested and seek their advice.

Financial Matters

Finance is needed to cover both tuition fees and living expenses. A student loan can cover these expenses and is repaid when earnings go above the threshold, currently £16,365. Please see www.slc.co.uk for further information.

PQA Applications

PQA is worthy of consideration for a number of reasons. Maturity and self-confidence can be developed before the chosen course is undertaken. Universities look favourably on that additional

maturity and it is possible that an offer is more likely. Girls are able to concentrate on their A2 studies and have longer to decide on a course if they are uncertain. Gap years can be very relevant to some applications and PQA can give a second chance to girls who have been unsuccessful first time round.

The school will support girls throughout their PQA. The application is made through the school and we supply a reference and send the application to UCAS. Offers are unconditional and girls must choose one offer to confirm by the beginning of May.

Overseas courses

Some girls do apply for courses overseas. Research is once again essential and girls need to be fully aware of the requirements for their chosen course.

UK courses outside UCAS

Courses such as Fine Arts, Drama and Music are available outside of the UCAS system. Individual applications are made to each institution and can be made alongside an UCAS application. A portfolio of work is often required or an audition. Competition can be high.

We hope that this document gives you as parents the information you need to support your daughter in her studies and her application. The girls need to take ownership of the work they are doing and of their futures. Support and guidance will of course be given, but Universities expect girls to do the research, visit the Universities, email or telephone them.