



Bexley Grammar School 6th Form

Getting ready for the next step

Applying to University

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The decisions you make about University over the coming months will affect the rest of your life, so it's vital that you think carefully, do lots of research and get good advice. This booklet is designed to help you to make a successful UCAS application.

We want to help you make the right decisions. Mr Auckland, Miss Roberts, Miss Aspill, Ms Caley-Gardiner, Ms Stoddard, your tutors, your subject teachers are all available to answer questions and give you advice about your applications – please ask!

Good luck!

Guidance on filling in UCAS online application

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

You will need the following details to complete your application. Start getting it together now – writing it all down here will mean it is all in the same place and easy to find:

- Full email address: Gmail etc is fine, but remember – **no daft names!** You are trying to impress...
... @ ...

NB BGS would like to keep this email address to invite you back for future events after you've left, please email auckland_s@bexleygs.co.uk if you'd rather we didn't. There will never be any obligation to respond.

Exam boards and grades for all GCSEs you took:

The borough in which you live:

School UCAS 'buzzword': **summer**

These details will be needed for finance in Spring 2022:

National Insurance Number:

Passport Number:

You will get the following once you have filled in your personal details on the UCAS website:

Your UCAS Username and Password:

Your UCAS Personal ID number:

What do I need to do?

- Register on UCAS during the Power Day
- Complete and save each section of the application – this can be done bit by bit over the coming weeks
- Make sure that your personal statement is about 650 words [4000 characters incl. spaces max]/47 lines of text, font ~ Times new roman, font size 12; save as a word document.
- Once finished, ask your reference writer, usually your tutor, to check it.
- When you fill in the application form itself (online) you must choose 5 courses to stand the best chance of getting offers.
- Medicine, Dentistry & Veterinary Med/Science applicants must choose at least one different course. Other students may choose more than one course (including at the same university), but **remember that the same personal statement and reference will be read for each application.**

- Each university will know only that you have applied to them (and should not mind if you have applied for two courses at the same institution) so they do not know whether they are your first or last choice. (Type them in any order – the application will rearrange them alphabetically.)
- You will need to pay £26.50 online for your application using a debit/credit card when complete and send your finalised application.
- Once it has been checked & sent, it takes 2 days to get to each university. Some universities are quick to acknowledge receipt of your application and to make offers; others are very slow. Don't panic!
- Your offers will appear on your UCAS hub

University and Careers Research

It is vital that you do thorough research into possible university courses, either to decide on courses that will really suit you, or to decide whether or not to apply. Even if you remain unsure, it is better to apply and withdraw your application later, than to make a late decision to put in an application, perhaps having had to research courses in a hurry.

Thorough research is likely to cover the following points:

What are your real interests, strengths, aspirations? You must be enthusiastic about a subject in order to study it for three or more years.

What grades/points do you think you can realistically achieve?

You can judge this from mock exam grades and your reports

Subject/grades I got in my Part Ones

H	H	H	S	S	S
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Grades I think I can **realistically** achieve by my final exams

H	H	H	S	S	S
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What kind of student do you think you are?

Tick all relevant boxes:

- I would prefer to study full-time for three years at an academic subject
- I would prefer a subject which is more vocational (links directly to a particular career)
- I would prefer a mixture of study and work placements (foundation or sandwich degrees)

Where would you like to study?

Tick all relevant boxes:

- I would like to stay at home while I study
- I would like to be reasonably near, so I can visit home easily
- I would prefer to be further away
- Distance is not a factor – it just depends on the university
- I like the idea of living in a city while I study
- I like the idea of being in a more countrified environment
- I would prefer to be in a self-contained campus setting
- I have no strong feelings about the type of campus or setting

What is your preferred course?

- I would like to take further a subject I am studying now
- I would like to try something new
- I would like to study one subject only
- I am thinking about a combined course
- I would like a course which includes a year studying abroad
- I am prepared to take extra tests and/or attend interviews

- I am not prepared to take extra tests and/or attend interviews

Abbreviations on UCAS

FT - Full time

PT - Part time

SW - Sandwich year (a year working, usually between years two and three)

3FT/4SW means it can be three years full time, or 4 years if you choose to include a sandwich year .

Hons - Honours

Fdg - Foundation

Degree type:

Most students will apply for a BA or BSc. BA= **undergraduate** degree in an arts/humanities subject or BSc= **undergraduate** degree in a science subject.

Some of you may choose a longer MA or MSc= masters degree (in arts or science). These can sometimes be taken as a first degree (usually 4 years) but are usually a second degree having completed your BA/BSc.

A few of you may be interested in FdSc or FdA= foundation degree in science/arts. This is usually a two year course focused on the skills needed for employment in a particular sector. Foundation degrees can be 'topped up' by an additional year, to make them an 'honours' degree.

What kind of study experience do you want?

The same course can differ enormously from university to university. Once you have reached the point of looking at courses in detail these are some other points to consider.

- Are there particular aspects of the subject that you already know you are interested in? Does the course at your chosen university include these?
- Are there particular areas you would prefer to avoid? (For example, most economics courses require a high level of mathematical knowledge and skill: are you prepared for this?)
- Are you better at exams or coursework? Some courses rely more on exams than others.
- Are there other courses that might have a slightly different name that you could also look at? (The UCAS Course-Finder search is helpful here.)
- What are completion/drop-out rates like at this university? (Some of the 'alternative' guides in the careers library are useful for this.)
- Will this degree give you good opportunities for employment/further studies afterwards – that is, will it get you where you want to go? (Remember that all academic courses offer transferable skills which are suitable for many careers. University websites generally say what jobs their graduates go on to do.)
- If it involves living away from home, would you be guaranteed university accommodation for your first year?
- What kind of teaching is there on this course? (Some universities offer much less support than others – if this would not suit you it is wise to check – again, alternative guides offer this information.)

Remember that the most important thing is finding the course that will suit you, and where you will succeed.

Planning your personal statement

What can I offer the university who makes me an offer?

Why do I want to study this subject?

Personal statements are about two things: why you want to study the course you have chosen, and why you would make a good student.

In your personal statement you then need to show why you are suitable to study that subject – because you are keen to do it, and because you can give examples of your skills and qualities that would make you a good student for it.

Even if you haven't yet finished choosing what subject you want to study, you can begin work on your personal statement by writing down the skills and qualities you have. These are some useful qualities that all universities will want to see in prospective students. How do you demonstrate them through your learning and extra-curricular activities?

Academic ability and intellect	Empathy	Initiative and resilience	Communication skills
Organisation and punctuality	Team work	Insight and integrity	Problem-solving

Once you have chosen the subject you want to study you need to think carefully about why you want to study it, and what you can say to prove that.

What interests you about your chosen subject?

Going beyond your subject

Universities want to hear what else you get up to when you are not studying- so put it in your personal statement. They do not like lists of things you have done; instead they want to know what you have done, what skills you have gained and how it will help you at university. Use the table below to write information about any courses/events/clubs/jobs you have done in the sixth form to help you write your personal statement. You can include things that show your passion for your subject or it can be anything that has given you necessary skills for university.

Event/Course/Club/ Job	Skills you have gained	How will it help you at university or in the future
Eg. Sports Leadership Qualification	Communication whilst working with peers and younger students. Organisation whilst planning events and working as a team to plan	Integration into community Developing new society/clubs Confidence working in groups
Eg. Attending online lectures on subject specific module	Increased knowledge and understanding of subject specific methods/research Structure of lectures/note taking skills	New skills for course at university Confidence that you are applying for correct course

Writing the statement

A good structure to follow is below:

Paragraph 1:

Keep it short. It should be clear what subject you want to study and why.

Paragraph 2:

Give more detail about what you are currently studying that has made you want to study the subject at university e.g. a particular novel you have read in English if you are wanting to study English literature, or a particular theory you have studied in Business.

In this same paragraph sell your Extended Essay. This is a process that only IB students complete and is a fantastic example of your ability to research and work independently. Hopefully your EE subject will be closely connected to the subject you are interested in studying.

Paragraph 3:

What else have you done outside of the IB course to show you're interested in the subject e.g. attended an online lecture, followed a podcast, watched additional foreign language films. Importantly, what have you gained from doing these additional activities?

Paragraph 4:

Anything extra-curricular that strongly links to your subject choice or presents you as a student who is ready for the demands of university life e.g. Mark Evison Foundation, NCS, Duke of Edinburgh. It must be worthwhile evidence. Playing in the school football team is not relevant for most courses!

It can be helpful to round off with a short paragraph emphasising again why you want to study that subject, or why you would be a good student, or mentioning career aspirations.

Some tips to remember:

- Your statement must be original – you must not copy anyone else's at all (UCAS run plagiarism software)
- Do not write in fancy language
- Do not use words you don't understand
- Be positive about yourself, and try to show all your achievements and qualities in the best light possible, but make sure you are always truthful
- Check grammar and spelling
- Ask for comments and help, once you have completed a draft
- Your enthusiasm for the course you have chosen is the most important thing – make sure that is clear

Examples of successful personal statements from the last few years (receiving all five offers)

Student A applying for Biomedical Sciences:

The main reason for my interest in Biomedical Sciences goes back to 2018, when I travelled to Sierra Leone. This journey opened my eyes to the importance of healthcare. The realisation of the fragility of the human body made me feel obliged to try and make a difference. My father suffers from Nephrotic Syndrome and was wrongly diagnosed with a liver problem whilst living in Sierra Leone. His problem escalated even further when given the wrong medication. I would like to try, through dedication and study, to reduce the risk of misdiagnosis and inaccurate treatment of medical conditions.

Inquisitive by nature, I always find myself questioning why and how things happen, especially in science. Studying Higher Biology and Chemistry has deepened my determination to pursue a career in which I can combine my interest in science with my passion to make a difference: in researching, for example, the effectiveness of diagnostic procedures and treatments. Chemistry has given me the skills to evaluate experiments analytically. I am always challenged to use my initiative especially when learning about complex compounds such as benzene, and its complicated structural arrangement. This compels me to want to study Chemistry's contribution to medical science. In Biology, I enjoy learning about diseases such as Cancer and the exponential cell division into malignant tumours from one mutated cell. I would welcome the opportunity to research Cancer in more detail and potentially make a difference. Higher Maths, on the other hand, has allowed me to develop my quantitative skills. I believe that these skills will be beneficial in the future, especially with tasks such as data analysis with human samples.

I have been volunteering regularly at a hospital in which I interact with patients and assist nurses. Something that impressed me was the empathy that was shown towards patients. Seeing doctors deal with patients in crisis and treat them with respect has had a lasting influence on me. I also learnt that effective communication is very important especially for correct diagnosis and patient management. I arranged to work a week at a hospital to gain more insight into how the different departments work together. In the hospital, I shadowed an FY1 as well as an Orthopaedic doctor. This week taught me that effective teamwork is one of the keys to success. I attended a lecture given by an Orthopaedic surgeon at the Royal Society of Medicine. She demonstrated that teamwork was fundamental by providing evidence in a series of photographs showing her past operations. Each photograph included at least 4 healthcare professionals present in the operating theatre to ensure a swift operation and avoid risk of infection. This is an issue discussed in Atul Gawande's book titled 'Better', which I have found absorbing. Due to my desire to help others, I became a science prefect. I dedicate my Thursdays to helping GCSE students with Biology and Chemistry. I also help my personally-assigned student twice a week, as I am a science mentor. Achieving a Silver award in the intermediate UKMT Maths challenge allowed me to practise my problem-solving and mathematical skills under time pressure. Outside school, I have been a keen basketball player for over 4 years, representing Bexley in the London Youth Games. I have taken part in many art projects including Rivers of the World, which is a global project. Although it is hard to balance my hobbies with my IB, I believe that I manage quite well.

Having gained experience in a variety of medical environments, I feel that I have gained insight into the impact that Biomedical Sciences has on others as well as the possible opportunities that can come out of it. Studying it will allow me to be part of a process in which, through research and experiments, more accurate diagnosis will be made to improve patient quality of life.

Student B applying for business studies with Spanish

In an increasingly global business world, the need to speak two languages is growing. On a personal level, Spanish and Business interest me since they are not restricted to a classroom but are seen in operation in the real world. A Czech proverb says: 'if you only know one language, you only live once'. In the future I aspire to work in business abroad, hence my desire to combine both subjects and become fluent in Spanish which is a global language, as despite the declining Spanish economy, countries like Mexico have promising economic futures. This is an example of how the ever-changing business world interests me. By studying a Business and Spanish course, I will be able to further my knowledge of two subjects which fascinate and excite me.

It is not only the language but also the Spanish culture that appeals to me and visiting the country has enhanced my enthusiasm to learn more. One of my proudest achievements is my work experience in Salamanca where, for a week, I worked in a nursery. While at the beginning I had difficulty communicating, at the end my oral and comprehension skills, as well as my confidence, had greatly improved. The experience helped me to become more independent as I navigated around the city and introduced myself on the first day: I learnt I can flourish outside my comfort zone. It combined my interests in both Spanish and Business as I adapted to different business cultures in Spain, such as working later. Ultimately, this experience increased my desire to become fluent in Spanish and to work abroad.

While I enjoy learning business theory, it is exciting to put it into practice and my involvement in Young Enterprise gave me the opportunity to do this. Working in communications, I conducted myself in a new environment and was most proud when I secured donations from TESCO to buy products for a fundraising event. I set up meetings and pitched ideas to a professional, which I found one of the most exciting parts of the task as it encouraged a 'right first time' mentality. Young Enterprise also taught me to work successfully as a team member, especially when the team leader was not dynamic, which thus improved my own leadership skills. My part-time job working in a football shop has further taught me about business practice. Most importantly, it has also required responsibility and problem-solving as I often man the shop alone, dealing with customers' problems. Balancing a job with other commitments has improved my time-management and helped me to cope with different pressures.

I often search for ways to extend my knowledge and as a language prefect I improved my own Spanish helping KS3 students, which required perseverance and dedication as we met weekly throughout the school year. This role also involved writing magazine articles which allowed me to refine my written and cultural knowledge through the research I conducted. I enjoy using my skills in a creative and non-academic setting, also shown by my interest in Spanish films and newspapers, my favourite of which was 'Abre los Ojos' as it explored the debate between ethics and science in a human and engrossing way.

Studying the IB has given me a wide skill set, the most important of which is communication. Presentations are a vital area of the course and it has taught me to be a confident public speaker, a skill useful in both Business and Spanish. My study of English has improved my analytical abilities, while Maths focuses on application and has helped within my study of Business. Furthermore, my extended essay which was Business focused has taught me to be an independent thinker, while motivating me to explore an idea which interests me.

I am a hardworking and diligent student and believe a degree combining Business and Spanish will enable me to study to a higher level two subjects which I enjoy and find interesting, while supporting my aim of working in business abroad.

Student C applying for English literature

What fascinates me most about literature is the ability to look through the eyes of an author or poet, fully engage with the concepts they have created and understand the way they view the world. Over the past few years I have been interested greatly by the different interpretations we can gain from a single text. Studying 'Jane Eyre' for example raised the question "Is this a romantic/feminist novel? Or a darkly gothic one?" The broad spectrum of ideas that we obtain from a text, both inside and outside the classroom has inspired me to continue my study of literature even further. I also have an interest in the many styles and genres of texts. After reading Marlowe's 'Dr Faustus' I developed an interest in 'dark' fiction. The controversial nature of this play really captivated my attention. Exploring how Elizabethan audiences would have viewed Faustus' hunger for power and use of black magic is an aspect I found deeply fascinating. This interest led me to read Ian Banks' 'The Wasp Factory'. What drew me to this novel was the way it was written; the way Banks makes the grotesque and disturbing nature of events seem almost casual, making the dilemma of the central character of great interest. Although the ending made me feel sickened, almost troubled, I was left with an array of unanswered questions, questions which made realise I have a genuine excitement to study literature. Another aspect of literature I enjoy is the insight it gives to human nature. Whilst reading Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale' I developed an understanding of the level of damage humans can inflict on each other. Referring to the suppression of women, Atwood herself says "All of the things I have written about have been done before, more than once". The honesty in Atwood's work makes the literary piece all the more powerful. Thus, literature to me, became more than just a piece of writing, but a didactic tool.

Through my studies, I have developed a keen interest in performance. I recently saw Trevor Nunn's onstage production of 'The Tempest'. Despite the well-known Ralph Fiennes taking the lead role of Prospero, I did not warm to the production. However, it was interesting to see Nunn's simplistic interpretation of the play as opposed to the more dramatic and magical vision I developed in class. The experience made me aware of the variety of interpretations we can gain from Shakespeare in particular and further contributed to my desire to study English. My other subject choices support my understanding of literature. History has provided me with the appreciation of contextual references, with F. Scott Fitzgerald's 'The Great Gatsby' being set in 1920's America. Studying the USA as part of this course allowed me to appreciate what events were taking place during the time the novel was written. Media Studies enables me to enhance my analytical skills by looking closely at the subtext. While looking at the opening to 'Jaws', it was interesting how many different responses we could obtain, from psychoanalytical to post-colonial.

My responsibilities and roles are tailored to my interest in English. My role as English Prefect has proved valuable as this has allowed me to promote the study of English outside of the classroom in the form of newsletter articles and work with sixth form open evenings. My work on the young journalist scheme (writing articles for a local newspaper) has improved my writing style and ability. Furthermore, I am an employed tutor of English to children aged 5-14, allowing me to extend my love for the subject to the workplace, inspiring others with the subject that inspires me.

I feel university will be an exciting experience that will allow me to delve deeper into critical perspectives of a variety of texts, actively engage in seminar and tutorials and shape my literary understanding to a profound level. For these reasons, I am keen to focus my studies purely on the study of English.

Who do I see if...?

Who do I see if...	Who to see and where to find them
I have finished my first draft of my personal statement and want it checked?	Your reference writer
I have lost my UCAS log-in details?	Mrs Leffen L6
Don't know what exam boards my GCSEs are with?	Your GCSE Certificates or your subject staff
I want to know my predicted grades?	Your October report Subject staff at Parents' Evening
I want something to be included in my reference as I have ran out of words in my personal statement?	Your reference writer
I have changed my mind about my course?	You need advice and guidance, please see: Head of Year Reference Writer Mrs Leffen Ms Caley-Gardiner
When my UCAS is complete and ready to be sent?	Mrs Leffen L6
I have a question about finance?	Mrs Leffen Ms Caley-Gardiner L6
I have a question about deadlines?	Form Tutor

Where else can I go for help...

- [Personal Statement Library](#) - this is good because it is not a library of finished personal statements which might tempt plagiarism, but a set of statements for different subjects which are marked up with comments to improve them
- The [personal statement advice](#) from UCAS
- www.university.which.co.uk allows students to search for courses according to their expected grades (converted into UCAS points)

We are all here for you every step of the way- whichever direction you want to go. Make sure you are thinking and researching yourself and keep in touch with us. We will do whatever we can!

Wishing you all the best for your very bright futures!