



The application process and choosing your course/university

Doug Jennings



Applying to university

The UCAS application process starts when you have decided on your choice of courses and universities.

Before this stage, you will therefore need to have thoroughly researched your options by looking at:

- University Prospectuses and UCAS Entry Profiles
- University / Departmental Open Days
- Official and unofficial guides to studying at university.



🌟 What are the benefits of going to university?

- It is the chance to study a subject you love for at least three years
- Over 50,000 courses to choose from in UK from over 160 universities and colleges
- Vocational or Academic preparation for career, development of skills for life
- Development of team work, time management, communication and leadership skills
- Experience a whole new social life.



👉 How is university different from school?

- Based on one (or two subject areas) – you can specialise in the subjects you love!
- It's all about independent learning – there's no-one to chase you up if you don't hand work in on time
- Teaching style based on lectures and seminars rather than classroom-based learning



👉 How is university different from school?

- You are surrounded by people who have chosen to be there and have an interest in the subject they are studying
- It is much bigger than school
- Completely different contact hours for different subjects
- Accommodation – living in halls/student houses or staying at home to save money



✦ So...you want to go to university – What Next?

- Start researching the course that you are interested in studying – remember that an English degree at Bristol University is not the same as one at Liverpool
- Start thinking about what university you would like to go to
- Open days – booking requirements?



Choosing your course

- Very important!
- Subject interests at school
- Type of course
- Flexibility / choice of subjects, opportunity to specialise
- Assessment methods – continual v exams
- Entry requirements – be realistic!



Choosing your university

- City centre or campus based?
- Close to home?
- Accommodation
- Cost
- Size of university
- Facilities offered
- Right course?



Other things to consider

- Opportunities to travel
- Sandwich courses – year in industry
- Language options
- Combined honours
- Optional units



Doing your research

- Take advice
- UCAS website
- Entry profiles
- Prospectuses and university websites
- Open Days



To gap year or not to gap year...?

- If you do decide to take a gap year, make sure you make it count.
- Gap years can look great on your UCAS form – voluntary work, travel, skills etc
- You may also choose to get work experience / build up your skills in a related area.
- You have two options – defer your entry or apply again for the next year.



The choice of your course and institution is very personal. Think carefully about what you want to study and what you will enjoy. Don't be swayed by pressure from friends, parents, teachers etc – you are more likely to succeed if you are enjoying your studies!



An overview of the process

- UCAS will accept your applications between 1 September and 15 January
- There is an earlier deadline (15 October) for Oxford and Cambridge Universities and certain courses eg Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science
- There are different rules for certain Art & Design routes (see UCAS)
- If you miss the 15 January deadline you can still apply, although universities do not have to consider it. If you apply after 1 July, you will go straight into Clearing.



✦ The importance of applying early...

- Universities will start considering applications as soon as they receive them meaning you may get greater consideration before the rush of applications that occurs towards the deadline.
- It may take some universities (including Bristol) longer to get back to you with an offer. Just because it may be later coming back to you, it doesn't mean you won't be offered a place. It's important you wait until you have all your decisions before making your final decision.
- You can get all the application angst out of the way early. That way you can concentrate on your studies!



👉 What are universities looking for?

- Relevant academic ability
- Motivation
- Study Skills
- Relevant experience
- Passion for the subject
- The whole person



👉 What do Admissions Tutors look for?

“It’s good to know that someone has a realistic understanding of what’s involved in studying for a history degree – not just watching TV documentaries and visiting castles but lots of reading and thinking!”

“Students who stand out demonstrate vocational commitment, so have taken time to visit an audiology department, spoken to an audiologist about what the job involves or contacted us to see what qualifications are required.”



Applying for high demand courses

Qualifications

- Have you got anything over and above the basic 3 A Level formula?

Research

- The market
- The course
- The selection criteria (not just the standard offer grades)
- Actual grades of successful applicants

Read around the subject

- Evidence of motivation and commitment

Tailor your application

- Evidence of close fit with selection criteria



The UCAS Form

- Personal information
- GCSE grades
- AS grades
- A2 predicted grades
- Any other qualifications
- Personal statement
- Teacher reference



🔥 You've Applied – What Next?

- Depending on where you apply and what course you apply for your application may be treated differently (i.e. Oxbridge have earlier deadlines)
- Applications are read by admissions tutors
- Interviews – at Bristol we interview for Medics and Vets, Drama and some engineering – not so much to test you but to check suitability
- Decisions – will come through at different times (no later than 31 March)



Dealing with offers

- Offers – these come in different shapes and sizes:
 - Conditional: Offer of a place conditional upon you gaining certain grades/points/marks
 - Unconditional: Offer of a place based on qualifications you've already gained (post AS/A2 level)
- Departmental open days
- Once you've had all your offers back you start making decisions about what to accept.



✦ You've been accepted...What next?

- Start properly researching the universities and courses that you have been accepted onto
- Make sure you know what you want out of the university you choose – academically and socially
- Choose your conditional firm (CF) and conditional insurance (CI)
- Apply for accommodation – different deadlines



✦ What if things go wrong?

There are two further chances to get a place at university if you don't get any offers or you don't get the grades to get in to your accepted places:

Extra: If you don't get any offers or you reject all your offers, this scheme allows you to have another choice before clearing. UCAS will contact you automatically and you can use this to apply to one course at a time to courses that still have spaces between mid-March to the end of June.



🌟 What if things go wrong?

Clearing: If you don't get the grades you had hoped for and your offer is not confirmed you can go through Clearing. This process runs from the middle of July and helps students find places that are still available. If your results are reasonable and you are a bit flexible, it should be possible to find you a place.

NB – You do need to be around in person to deal with this so make sure you are back from holiday to sort things out ASAP.



If things go right...Adjustment

- Point of the process is to provide a bit of leeway for students who do much better than they'd anticipated.
- For students who MEET AND EXCEED the terms of their FIRM choice offer
- NOT open to students who MISS their firm offer but meet and exceed the terms of their insurance offer
- Adjustment and Clearing will happen simultaneously so, to avoid confusion, applicants must state clearly which kind of vacancy they are seeking
- Applicants may make multiple enquiries but only one formal adjustment transaction
- While not restricted to A level students, adjustment will open on A level results day (closing on 31 August)



✦ At university...

- Make sure that you do some work – it's a myth that the first year doesn't count
- But...don't work too hard. There's no need to read every book on a reading list. If in doubt, ask your lecturer
- Don't be intimidated by other students – those who speak most in seminars are not always the brightest!



👉 Your social life: The first week...



Expect to do lots of:

- Queuing
- Repeating yourself
- Getting lost
- Wondering if everyone is as confident as they seem
- Smiling



✦ Your social life: Freshers' week...

- Introductory week, before the start of teaching designed to introduce you to the social side of university life
- Freshers' Fair – an opportunity for you to join the students' union's clubs and societies
- Normally fairly manic and can be expensive – pace yourself!
- Don't think every week at university life is like this – there is work to do as well...
- Be patient and stick with it. The friends you make at university are often friends for life!



For more information about the application process,
go to www.ucas.co.uk.

This website has guides to the whole application
process and will provide you with all the key dates
for applying for 2010 entry.



Useful resources

- www.bristol.ac.uk
- www.unistats.com
- www.opendays.com



✦ **Any questions?**

schools-colleges-liaison@bristol.ac.uk

