



WELCOME

to

YEAR 12

NEXT STEPS EVENING

Thursday 16th January 2025



# Welcome

**Mrs Hoad – Assistant Head of  
Sixth Form – Head of Year 12**

# OPTIONS AFTER YEAR 13

There are many options available to you – start doing your research now

- University – including Foundation degrees
- Higher & Advanced Apprenticeships
- Sponsored degrees – need to research now and get work experience to support
- School leaver programme (*works along the same lines as H&A apprenticeships/Sponsored Degrees*)
- Gap Year
- Work





# **Mr Huckle – Assistant Principal (Head of Sixth Form and Careers)**



# The Sixth Form Alliance

## Alumni

Inviting back alumni students to speak with our students from a wide variety of destinations: universities, apprenticeships and jobs



## Universities

Inviting in Universities to speak with our students: Russell Group and Local.

University visit and taster days: University of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.



## Employers

Inviting in local, national and international employers to speak about future options.



## Parents/Carers

Inviting in parents/carers to speak with students about their pathways to different careers.



## Apprenticeship Providers

Inviting in apprenticeship providers to advise and guide on apprenticeships: FCDO, MBDA, Unilever, Specsavers, Glaxo, Network Rail.





Key Stage 4

Key Stage 5

Life, 18+

GCSEs  
or other

Options  
16+

College or Sixth Form  
A-Levels, Vocational or T-Levels

Foundation Studies  
Study Prog/Supported Internships

Apprenticeships  
or Traineeships

Employment  
with Training

Options  
18+

Apprenticeships post 18

University

Employment with Training

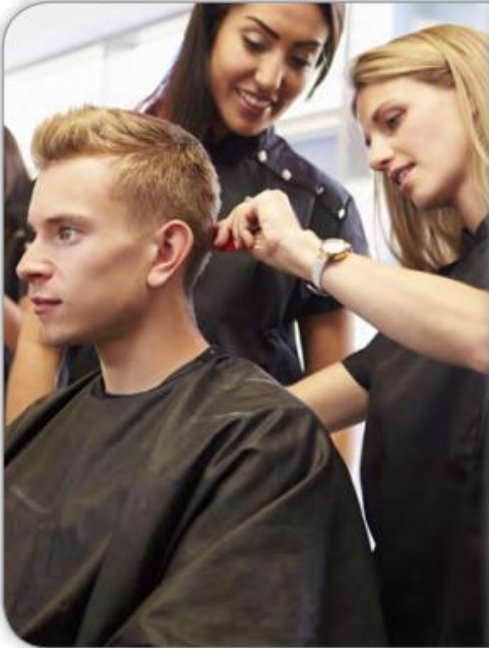
Employment

Adult Ed or Further Education

# Focus on Apprenticeships



- Apprenticeships were developed to help address the skills shortage in UK businesses.
- They provide a way of combining learning with on the job training, which helps build solid, professional skills transferable from one organisation to another.
- Apprenticeships can last from one to five years – and may be longer if undertaken part-time.
- They result in a professional qualification.
- Employers pay a salary and tuition fees are covered by the employer and the government.



### **LEVEL 2** *Intermediate apprenticeships*

**Typical length**  
12-18 months

**Entry requirements:**  
None or few

**Qualifications obtained:**  
GCSE, BTEC or equivalent

**Who's it for?**  
Mostly for 16-year-olds with limited or no academic qualifications.



### **LEVEL 4/5** *Higher apprenticeships*

**Typical length**  
3-5 years

**Entry requirements:**  
A levels or equivalent

**Qualifications obtained:**  
Higher national diploma / foundation degree

**Who's it for?**  
Mostly for those who want to qualify for professional career paths without attending university / college. Sometimes referred to as 'school leaver' or 'non-graduate' Programmes.



### **LEVEL 3** *Advanced apprenticeships*

**Typical length**  
12-24 months

**Entry requirements:**  
Usually 5 GCSEs

**Qualifications obtained:**  
A levels or equivalent

**Who's it for?**  
Mostly for 16-year-olds with reasonable academic achievements but who don't want to study in sixth form.



### **LEVEL 6/7** *Degree apprenticeship*

**Typical length**  
3-7 years

**Entry requirements:**  
At least 2 A levels or equivalent

**Qualifications obtained:**  
A BA or BSc degree or higher

**Who's it for?**  
Mostly for those with excellent sixth form results that want to study for a degree or similar whilst working. Aimed at attracting high-calibre candidates to bridge professional skills gaps.



# Degree Apprenticeships (Levels 6 and 7)



- Developed by universities, professional bodies and employers, they offer the chance to qualify with a bachelors or masters degree whilst working.
- Time is split between work and study (80%/20%).
- There are no tuition fees to pay - these are covered by the employer and the government.
- Salaries usually range between £7k-18k p/a but can be higher e.g Metropolitan Police £38k.

# Degree apprenticeship or University?



## **Pros of a degree apprenticeship**

- You'll get real-life experience working alongside your degree.
- Your degree is fully paid for, so there's no cost to you.
- You'll get paid a salary just like a normal employee.

## **Cons of a degree apprenticeship**

- You'll need to balance working and studying at the same time.
- You won't qualify for any student loans.
- Apprentices don't always get the traditional 'university experience'.
- Not as many subjects on offer

# National Apprenticeship Week 10-15<sup>th</sup> February 2025



<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

<https://www.ucas.com/apprenticeships/how-find-apprenticeship>

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/>

<https://uk.indeed.com/q-apprenticeships-jobs.html>





## Friday 24<sup>th</sup> January Period 1 – Apprenticeship Seminar

All year 12s off timetable for one lesson to attend a Degree Apprenticeship seminar with MBDA, Stevenage:

- 1) Degree apprenticeships on offer
- 2) Process of applying
- 3) Interview prep
- 4) Assessment
- 5) Two SWA Alumni will be outlining their journey through MBDA

**MBDA,  
EUROPEAN  
LEADER IN THE  
MISSILE  
INDUSTRY**



## Are you considering applying for a Degree Apprenticeship?

Join Cathy Eckett, Deputy Head at Biddenham, on Monday, **29th January from 10:00 to 11:00** for an informative session on everything you need to know about Degree Apprenticeships.

### What's included:

- Introduction to Degree Apprenticeships
- Guidance on how to prepare your application
- Tips and advice to boost your chances of success
- Assistance with developing the skills needed for a successful application process.

This is the first of an ongoing drop-in series, so don't miss out on getting valuable guidance to set you on the right track!

Sign up details:

✉ **Please email Miss Hopkins**  
**(ahopkins@bestacademies.org.uk) by Friday, 27th January** to secure your spot.

Degree Apprenticeships are competitive, but with the right preparation, you can stand out. Don't miss this chance to get ahead!



## Interview & Assessment Centre Support

### Year 12 and 13 students – are you considering a Degree Apprenticeship?

Don't miss the chance to receive expert guidance from Helen Ford, Network Rail's New Entrants Manager, on **Tuesday, 25th February.**

### What's included:

- Interview tips and tricks
- How to stand out in individual and group interviews
- Insights into assessment centre processes
- 1-1 practice interviews with Helen and her team
- Participation in a mock assessment centre

This is a fantastic opportunity to develop the skills needed to succeed in competitive interviews and assessment centres—crucial for securing Degree Apprenticeships.

✉ **Sign up by emailing Miss Hopkins by Monday, 10th February** to secure your place!

# GAP YEAR



*A period, typically an academic year, taken by a student as a break between school and university or college education.*

- Experience a different culture
- Learn a new language
- Develop new life skills
- Discover a hidden passion
- Prep for college/University/Life
- Improve yourself
- Live life to the fullest
- Boost your job prospects
- Breakdown classroom walls
- Have fun and make long lasting friendships.
- **Apply while you are still at Samuel Whitbread – and choose to defer later on, or when you apply select the next year as your admission date (i.e. September 2025)**



# Year 12 Work Experience – advanced planning needed – week commencing 7<sup>th</sup> July



- Parent/Carer consent form
- Work placement form completed by the employer
- Any experience is good experience
- Think outside the box
- Utilise family and friends
- Please commit
- Be aware we check on everyone
- Stand out from the crowd
- UCAS/CV

## The benefits

- Soft skills
- Differentiate yourself & make yourself more employable
- Enhance your application forms & interviews
- Road test a company/sector/role



## INDEPENDENT CAREERS ADVICE & GUIDANCE

Independent Career Advice and Guidance appointments are available with 4YP.

4YP is able to give advice and guidance on:

- Future options, pathways and career path exploration
- Information, Advice and Guidance
- Options, next steps, future plans, alternatives etc.

Book through the Parent Review Evening Booking System on the website, or through Louisa Freeman

[lfreeman@bestacademies.org.uk](mailto:lfreeman@bestacademies.org.uk)

<https://www.samuelwhitbread.org.uk/page/?title=Careers&pid=307>

Parents do not need to attend but can if felt to be beneficial.



BEGINNER'S GUIDE  
TO THE UNIVERSITY  
APPLICATION PROCESS (UCAS)

**Mrs Hoad – Assistant Head of Sixth  
Form - Head of Year 12**

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)



# SETTING THE SCENE UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGES ADMISSIONS SERVICE (UCAS)



- Central organisation through which applications are processed for entry to full-time higher education (HE) courses in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- They operate on behalf of all full-time higher education courses at member institutions

# THE UCAS JOURNEY



1. Potential applicant researches and finds a course, goes to Open Days
2. Registers online with UCAS Apply – **in school start** during **June 2025**
3. Completes form and processes payment **£28.50** – e.g. **October 2025**
4. Academic reference added by school / college
5. School sends electronically to UCAS – deadline **Jan 2026**
6. UCAS processes form and forwards to chosen universities
7. Universities submit decisions (offer or unsuccessful)
8. Applicant views decisions on UCAS Hub
9. Applicant replies to offers on UCAS Hub (Firm / Insurance) deadline **5<sup>th</sup> June 2026**
10. (Might choose accommodation with firm choice university)
11. Student and parents apply for **Student Finance** deadline **May 2026**
12. Universities confirm places when results are released **August 2026**

# What can we do now?



Obtain a real 'feel' for the institution, subject, course, career:

- University Conventions
- Higher education fairs
- Open Days
- Visit the town/city – even if it is virtual.... Online research, league tables
- Taster Courses/masterclasses/virtual lectures
- Subject specific events
- Career Fairs

[www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com)



# UCAS Discovery Fair - Trip



- **Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March**



- Trip to London ExCel for 161 students
- Letter going out next week
- First-come, first-served
- You will need to pay via Parentmail and complete a GoogleForm consent form

# Foundation degrees



- Not just for art and design courses
- Many subject degrees now offer a foundation year
- ‘Year 0’ rather than Year 1
- Extra year to prepare you for undergraduate study
- Different entry requirements to the degree – ideal if you have lower A level grades
- Can apply for a mixture of courses in your five choices e.g. 2 courses Year 0 (foundation) and three Year 1 (degree)

# UCAS Tariffs (points)



UCAS points	A level (2 years)	AS level (one year)	EPQ	BTEC Level 3 Extended Certificate (single)
56	A*			Distinction*
48	A			Distinction
40	B			
32	C			Merit
28			A*	
24	D		A	
20		A	B	
16	E	B	C	Pass
12		C	D	
10		D		
8			E	
6		E		

# Filling out the application online...



**.... don't panic!  
– we will help you!  
We start this  
process in June  
this year – you  
have 5 months to  
get it right!**



# KEY FEATURES OF ADMISSIONS SCHEME



- **Maximum of 5 choices**
- **4000 character personal statement – three sections**
- Some choice restrictions:
  - Medicine, Veterinary, Dentistry – **max 4** choices in one field
  - Oxford or Cambridge – you cannot apply to both
- ‘Invisibility’ (blind – universities can’t see your other choices)
- **Fee - £28.50      Free for Free School Meals – Waived fee**

# Personal statement



Parents: What can you do to help?

- Encourage participation – e.g. helping at scouts; sports teams; hobbies and spare time activities
- Part-time jobs
- Extra reading in interesting topic areas
- MOOCs – Massive Open Online Courses
- Research and visiting universities for open days
- ‘Interested and interesting’

# APPLYING TO START UNIVERSITY IN 2026? PERSONAL STATEMENTS ARE CHANGING

WE'VE MADE PERSONAL STATEMENTS EASIER TO COMPLETE.  
INSTEAD OF ONE LONG ESSAY, WE'VE BROKEN THEM DOWN  
INTO THREE SIMPLE QUESTIONS.

## UCAS

NEW FOR 2026





# Q1: why do you want to study this course or subject?

You'll want to show **evidence** of passion, curiosity and interest, this might include:

## Motivations for studying this course(s):

- Have you been inspired by a key role model or moment in your life?
- Is it a subject you love and want to pursue further?
- What is your drive?
- How has your path led you to this course or subject area?

## Knowledge of this subject area and interests:

- Is there a particular subject area you've researched?
- Something you can't wait to learn more about?
- What about a book or subject expert doing great things that's sparked your interest?

## Future plans; demonstrate why this course/subject is a good fit:

- Do you already have a particular profession in mind?
- How might you use your studies to launch your career?
- What's important to you and your future, and how might the knowledge gained from this course(s) help you achieve this?



**Remember** these are just some examples, you don't need to include it all. The key is to research the course(s) to find out what might be most relevant.



# Q2: How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject

Focus on what's most **recent** and **relevant** to your subject or course(s), examples could include:

## How your studies or training relate to chosen course(s) or subject area:

- This could be your current or previous studies.
- This could be from any form of formal education – think school, college, training, or short online courses.

## What relevant or transferable skills have you got that make you a great candidate:

- Are there a couple of subjects that helped you develop a core set of relevant skills required for your chosen course(s).
- Maybe a particular module or project helped you understand where your interests and strengths lie.

## Any relevant educational achievements

- Universities and colleges will see your grades on your application - don't waste space talking about these.
- Focus on your other accomplishments like a competition, holding a position of responsibility or representing the school/college.



**Remember** these are just some examples, you don't need to include it all. The key is to research the course(s) to find out what might be most relevant.





# Q3: what else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

Examples should be **reflective** and **demonstrate** further **suitability** for your subject or course(s), this could include:

## Work experience, employment, or volunteering

- In-person or virtual work experience.
- Paid for work or volunteering.
- The key thing is reflection on the experiences and the skills gained relevant to your chosen course(s).

## Personal life experiences or responsibilities

- Is there a situation you've personally overcome that has influenced your decision?
- Are there personal experiences that have helped you develop essential qualities for the course?

## Hobbies and any extracurricular or outreach activities:

- Think sports, reading, community work, summer schools.
- Any activities outside of core studies that help further showcase why you'd make a great student.

## Achievements outside of school or college

- This could be a position of responsibility for local clubs or groups, competitions, or qualifications you've attained outside of the classroom.



**Remember** these are just some examples, you don't need to include it all. The key is to research the course(s) to find out what might be most relevant.

# UCAS KEY DATES



Completed applications, including our reference, should be sent to UCAS by the following dates:

- **16th October 2025** for dentistry, medicine, veterinary science and veterinary medicine and for all courses at the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge.
  - Entry tests may have an earlier date. Students need to register 2 weeks in advance
- **Conservatoires** – e.g. music performance – have their own early deadline e.g. **1<sup>st</sup> October 2025**
- **31st January 2026** for all other courses. **SWA has a December deadline for all applications to be sent to UCAS**
- **24th March 2026** for some Art and Design courses except those listed with a **15th January** deadline.

THESE DATES ARE  
SUBJECT TO  
CHANGE

These are  
assumptions  
based on  
deadlines for this  
current year

# UNIVERSITY & COLLEGE DECISIONS



- Admissions tutors can make one of three decisions:
  - **Conditional Offer**
  - **Unconditional Offer**
  - **Unsuccessful**
- April/May 2026: Applicants then keep a maximum of two offers:
  - **Firm**
  - **Insurance**
- Any remaining offers must be declined

# CONFIRMING YOUR PLACE – AUGUST 2026

1. Results day: Exam results are issued to applicant
2. Admissions staff check if you have matched the conditions of their offer
3. If yes, you will be sent an official confirmation of your place on UCAS and via email. Well done!
4. **If no – speak to the sixth form team straight away**



Results Day 2025 = 14<sup>th</sup> August

Results Day 2026 = 13<sup>th</sup> August

# Other incentives ....



Some universities are also offering:-

- Free laptop
- Cash
- Cash for EPQ A grades
- First choice of accommodation for early firm choice
- Reduced grade offers
- Scholarships
- Bursaries

**It is important to choose a university on the basis of the quality of the degree and teaching, and future employment prospects.**



# STUDENT FINANCE



Tuition Fees loan

Maintenance loan

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

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-finance-calculator>

<https://university.which.co.uk/advice/advice-for-parents/parents-what-you-need-to-know-about-student-finance>

Money saving expert  
student loan calculator  
<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-finance-calculator/>

# Worried about borrowing so much money?



Tuition fees loan (per year) ⓘ

£ 9250

£0  £9,250

Maintenance loan (per year) ⓘ

£ 11002

£0  £11,002

7097 8430 11002

Likely starting salary ⓘ

£ 24000

£0  £60,000

**£14,420**

**£7,270**

What you  
repay? ⓘ

Converted to  
today's money ⓘ

Remember, this is based on your salary increasing to **£103,730** by the time your debts clear (in **30** years).

For lower salaries, the amount you repay won't change as you vary the fees or loan - this is because the debt disappears after 30 years

Pay 9% over £25,000 e.g. if you earn £30,000 – you pay 9% of £5,000 which is £450 = **£37.50 per month**, taken from your payslip.

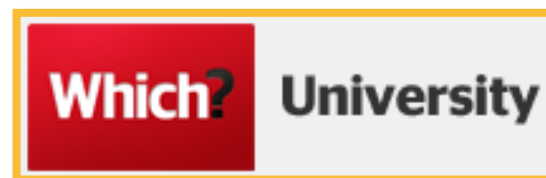
## What you'll repay on a Plan 5 student loan

Salary	What you'll repay each year
£24,000	You don't pay
£26,000	£90/year (9% of £1,000)
£35,000	£900/year (9% of £10,000)
£50,000	£2,250/year (9% of £25,000)
£100,000	£6,750/year (9% of £75,000)

# What is best for me?

Please consider which University, Apprenticeship or job that you are applying for based on your:

- Academic ability (Degree/Foundation Degree)
- Employability (post degree)
  - [www.unistats.direct.gov.uk/](http://www.unistats.direct.gov.uk/)
- Passion!



# FAQ



- Does the L3 Mathematical Studies course (student enrichment) count towards UCAS points?
- Will there be help from SWA, weighting the UCAS personal statement if student wishes to apply for different courses?
- If I want to apply for the armed services will there be help and guidance?

# COMMUNICATION



- Your student email account – check it regularly – you could be missing out on valuable information e.g. work experience emails from ([lfreeman@bestacademies.org.uk](mailto:lfreeman@bestacademies.org.uk))
- They should also check the SWA-Year12 Google Classroom
- Tutor – all have experience of applications and UCAS
- Head of Year – [shoad@bestacademies.org.uk](mailto:shoad@bestacademies.org.uk)
- Admissions and UCAS queries – [icollins@bestacademies.org.uk](mailto:icollins@bestacademies.org.uk)

Email addresses: First initial and Surname followed by **@bestacademies.org.uk**