



THE NORTON
KNATCHBULL
SCHOOL

Post-18 Choices Parent Information

NKS

Topics

Mr Freear

University

- UCAS
- Early Applicants
- Universities
- Finance
- Personal Statements

Mrs Vernon

- Alternative Options



Our Message



- Everything should be on the cards for all students.
- Although the majority will apply for University via UCAS we believe every student should be exploring all possible pathways to ensure they are finding the very best fit for themselves.
 - The key to everything is RESEARCH.

Overview



Level	Qualification / educational routes				
8	Doctorate (PhD)			NVQ 8	
7	Masters degree (MA)			Degree apprenticeship / NVQ 5, 6, 7	
6	Bachelors degree BA or BSc				
5	Foundation degree FdA or FdSc	Higher National Diploma (HND)			
4			Higher National Certificate (HNC)	Higher apprenticeship / NVQ 4	
3	A levels Grades A-E	International Baccalaureate	T Levels	BTEC (extended) diploma BTEC certificate	Advanced apprenticeship / NVQ 3
2	GCSE Grades 4- 9 (C, B, A or A*)			BTEC first diploma	Intermediate apprenticeship / NVQ 2
1	GCSE Grades 1- 3 (D,E,F or G)			Foundation diploma / entry level qualifications	Traineeship / NVQ 1



- All University applications are made via UCAS.
- All students were given the opportunity to set up their UCAS account.
- UCAS accounts are set up using students personal email accounts. So when checking with them it is important to remind them of this fact as important messaging can often be missed due to this fact.
- There is a fee of £28.95 that needs to be paid to UCAS before the application can be processed.
- UCAS is a fantastic hub for information and resources for parents and students alike and I would advise that you spend some time there yourselves.

Students Options



Students can apply for *up to* five courses.

- These can all be the same subject.
- They can all be at the same institution (*Apart from Cambridge or Oxford*).
- They can all be different subjects at different institutions.

A rough guide to choosing would be:

- Two Aspirational
- Two Realistic
- One Insurance

Once all applications are in the Universities will make their offers.

From there students have to accept or decline. They are allowed to accept one as a Conditional firm choice and another as their Conditional Insurance

Important to note the distinction between Conditional and Contextual.

UCAS Key Dates.



15th October 2025

Early Applications Deadline

All applications for Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Veterinary Sciences and Dentistry have to be completed by this date

8th December 2025

NKS Internal UCAS Deadline

This is our deadline for all other UCAS entries. This is in order to enable us to process all applications, ensure that all personal statements are as effective as possible and to allow time either side of Christmas

14th January 2026

UCAS Equal Consideration Deadline

UCAS Final Deadline. They will not accept any submissions after this date. As PPE's take place after this date there should be no reason to students to be submitting on or near this date!

13th May 2026

Reject by default deadline

If students have not returned their offers by this date they are automatically rejected.

13th August 2026

A Level Results Day

UCAS Tariffs



- Sometimes there can be confusion between UCAS Tariffs and grades.
- The tariff system is in place so that different qualifications can be given equal weighting.
- As students here are only studying A Levels this is less significant.

Grade	Points
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

Every course is different, but common tariff points will be something like:

128 - AAB
112 – BBC
96 - CCC

Low Tariff vs High Tariff



Benefits of Low-Entry Requirements	Drawbacks of Low-Entry Requirements
Increased Accessibility	Potential Dilution of Quality
Inclusive Education	Mismatched Expectations
Flexibility	Perceived Stigma
Alternative Pathways	Limited Specialization

Benefits of High-Entry Requirements	Drawbacks of High-Entry Requirements
Increased guarantee of quality	Potential Dilution of Quality
High Expectations	High Expectations
Prestige	Less flexibility – e.g No part time work.
Specialisation & increased research opportunities	Fixed Pathways

Contextual Offers



The type of offer you received will depend on the course and provider you apply to.

Not every university or college makes contextual offers, finding out who, will again come down to research.

Contextual offers can include:

- a reduced offer – typically a grade or two lower than advertised in the course entry requirements
- an offer of a place on a course with a foundation year
- a guaranteed interview
- an unconditional offer
- a course with additional support in place to help you reach your full potential
- giving your application extra consideration when making you an offer

Examples of circumstances considered:

- Where you live – some universities may use postcode measures to see if you live in an area where there is a high level of deprivation, or a low number of people going to university.
- Your school or college – if your school's academic performance is lower than the national average, or a small number of pupils go on to higher education.
- If you have participated in certain outreach programmes.
- Household income – if your total household income is lower than average.
- Parental education – if your parents did not attend university.
- If you have spent time in local authority care, such as a foster home, residential children's home or kinship care.
- If you are estranged from your parents – if your relationship has broken down leading to no contact.
- If you have caring responsibilities – those who are unpaid carers for a family member or friend..
- If you have a disability or mental health condition – including learning differences and long-term health conditions.

This is not a full list – some universities consider a range of circumstances, and others may not consider some of the above groups.

Early Applications - 15th October



Certain Courses and Institutions ask for applications to be made early.

These are applications to:

- Cambridge
- Oxford
- Medicine Courses
- Dentistry Courses
- Veterinary Medicine Courses
- Veterinary Science Courses

Students can only apply for one of Cambridge or Oxford.

And they can only apply for one college within that University

It is possible to apply via an Open Application and if successful be placed in a college. Both also operate a pooling system for strong candidates who can be reallocated to another college.

Cambridge historically invite more applicants to Interview – Cambridge Interviews are more structured.

Oxford relies therefore more heavily on its admission test scores – Their interviews can be more esoteric.

- This will be because they are either hugely popular, prestigious, require interviews and additional testing or a combination of all these things.
- Because of this there are a lot of external 'consultants' who will claim to offer advice, guidance and support for a charge. There is nothing that can be offered by them that isn't freely available from the Institutions and the Government's student services.
- All students applying for an Early application will be closely supported by the school.

University Admissions Tests



- **UCAT** - University Clinical Aptitude Test
- **LNAT** - National Admissions Test for Law
- **ESAT** – Engineering and Science Admissions Test
- **TMUA** – Test of Mathematics for University Admission
- **Admissions Test at Cambridge/Oxford** – Alongside most of the above most courses and colleges will have their own admissions assessments
- **New for 2026 – Admissions Test at University College London (UCL)**
UCL is introducing admissions test for various Mathematics and Social Science programmes
And will require all students to sit the TARA (Test of Academic Reasoning for admissions)

UCAT



The UCAT (University Clinical Aptitude Test) is a computer based admissions test used by Universities to help select applicants to their medical and dental degrees. The UCAT costs £70

1. Students need to check that the courses they have applied for require the UCAT
2. Create a UCAT account anytime from now until the 19th September
3. If applicable students should submit an application for access arrangements or apply for the UCAT bursary
4. Book a test from 17th June (Booking closes on the 19th September)
5. Tests are sat at Pearson Training centres.
6. The closest for Ashford are – Canterbury, Chatham, Hastings & Tunbridge Wells.

LNAT



•The Law National Aptitude test helps you understand if Law is the right career path for you, and it helps Universities check that you'll be able to succeed on a law course. It is currently used for courses at the following universities:

- University of Bristol
- University of Cambridge
- Durham University
- University of Glasgow
- Kings College London
- London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)
- University of Oxford
- SOAS
- UCL

ESAT



ESAT is used by Imperial College London, University of Cambridge, and UCL for Engineering and Science based subjects.

- Imperial College London
- University of Cambridge
- UCL



TMUA is used by several universities for Mathematics, Economics and Computer Science courses. It is currently used for courses at the following universities:

- Imperial College London
- University of Cambridge
- London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)
- University of Warwick
- Durham University
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- UCL

What type of University?



Campus: University is a self-contained environment. All facilities are University owned. In theory a student might never need to leave the campus as nearly all their needs are met.

City: University buildings are spread out over a city. Halls of residence and learning sites could be more than walking distance apart. Student's needs are met by the wider location as well as the University institution.

Collegiate: Cambridge & Oxford run a collegiate system. For these you apply to a specific College within the University.

Durham, Lancaster & York also have a collegiate style setup. University of Kent and Roehampton have similar but less pronounced version of this.

Finance



University finances are a deeply personal consideration.

University finance comes in the shape of :

- Tuition Fee Loan (Up to £9,535)
- Maintenance Loans (Means tested – Maximum £13,762 dependent on location and living arrangements)

The information we think you should be aware:

- The amount re-paid is based upon how much someone earns not how much they borrow.
- On the current plan repayments do not begin until someone is meeting the threshold of £25,000 a year.
- The repayment comes out before tax.
- Outstanding loan amounts are written off after 40 years.
- Student Loans do not affect your credit score and are not recorded on your credit report.
- As of 2023 – The average UK Graduate earns £10,500 a year more than a non-graduate.
- Student Finance applications should be started in March 2026 and ideally completed by May 2026.

We would advise again to research options as there are lots of variations dependent on course structure, content, location among others.

Personal Statement

The person
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Students h
Each quest

From 2026

1. Why do you course or

- Motivation
course
- Knowledge
and intere
- Future pla
fit.

Our Main advice would be:

- Plan, draft, redraft and share.
- Write like a human being.
- Avoid making best friends with a thesaurus.
- The more specific the course the more specific the statement.



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‘UCAS Grades’



UCAS grades and predicted grades are not necessarily one and the same.

Teachers will be asked to generate UCAS grades for students using their existing data

Across the country only 33% of UCAS grades match actual outcomes.

Our aim is to encourage and fuel aspiration.

There are two thresholds to cross:

The first is the published required grades of the course. - These tend to be fixed.

The second is the actual grades that the University will accept. – These can change year by year.

We are open to discussion, but it is important that it is a two-way discussion.

With University applications we will advise the five choices to be a mix of:
Aspirational, Realistic & Insurance

And also that the five choices are all considered genuine options.

Clearing:

In the very rare case that all five choices do not receive an offer. Students are entitled to make an extra choice.

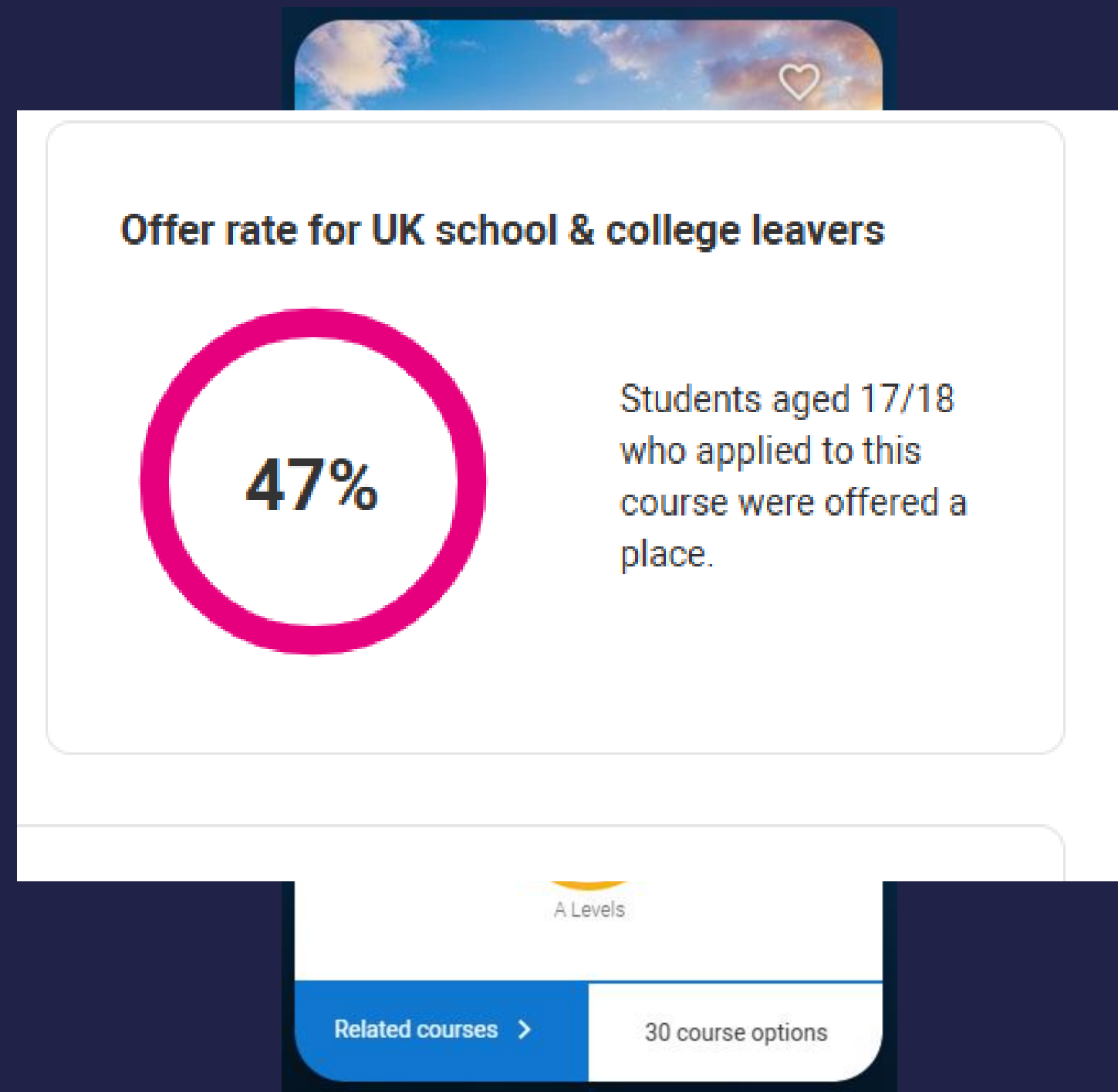
If after results your firm and insurance choices have not made you an offer you can enter into clearing

Reality vs Outcomes



No one institution or course is the same.

Which can add to the confusion and sometimes offer false hope.



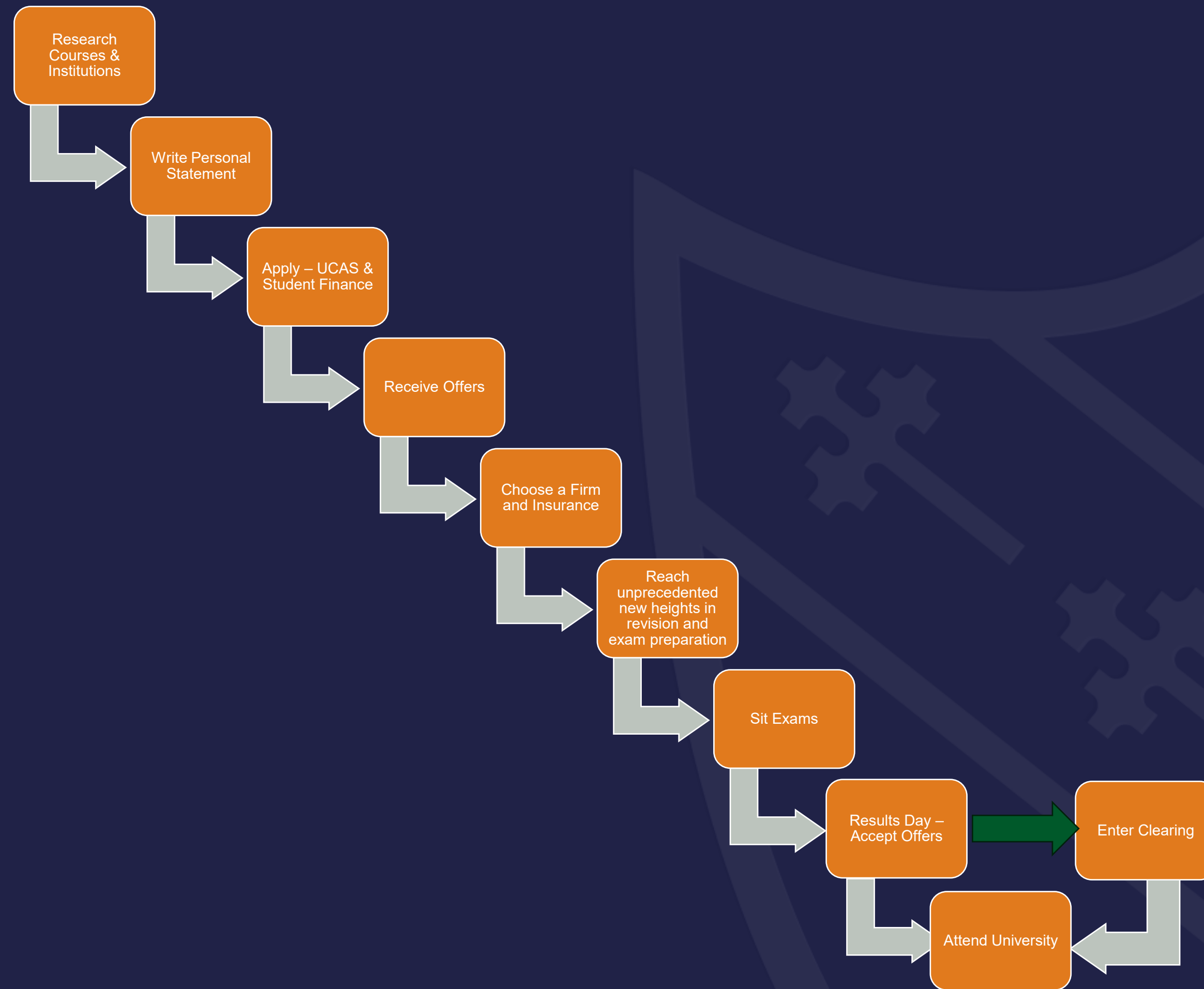
**Not considering
University?**



**THE NORTON
KNATCHBULL
SCHOOL**

What are the options?

Summary Pathway



What are the options?

Apprenticeships

Internships

Traineeships

Gap Year

Employment

Independent Travel

- Offered at Levels 3, 4 and 5 with a likely timescale of 18 months to 3 years
- Degree Level 6 - Completed over 4-6 years
- All fully paid via an annual salary
- Applications made direct to the employer
- Research is key
- Register with websites such as www.apprenticeship.org to receive updates as and when adverts are posted
- Create and update a CV regularly
- Application process starts as early as November 2025 for a start date of next September
- Applications may require multiply stages to include, application, online assessments, interview, final assessment. The attached video gives some great advice about how to be successful at interview. <https://youtu.be/WeJaiSYChjg>

- **An internship is a professional learning experience that offers meaningful, practical work related to a field of study or career**
- **Mostly offered to those over the age of 18**
- **Many are unpaid however there are some that have a short term paid period, often prior to the start of university.**
- **Research again is key!**

- Traineeships are short, work-based learning programs designed to support 16–24-year-olds gain practical skills and experience before entering full time work.
- You guessed it research is key!

- Essential to plan for your Gap Year well in advance
- The average cost of a Gap Year is between £3500, £10,000
- Many companies will plan and arrange everything for you but can be costly. Examples are those such as:

www.planninggapyear.com

www.greenhearttravel.org

www.gap360.com

- Consider alternatives such as employment - Holiday Tour Reps, Ski Seasons, Summer Sports Camps etc.. These offer both paid work, travel and a fantastic experience
- Make it worthwhile
- Research is key!

- Update your CV regularly
- Register with employment sites such as Indeed
- Consider using an employment agency to work as a temp to gain a range of experiences, skills and knowledge
- Make sure you have good references - speak to the sixth form team or someone you feel most appropriate to provide a reference for you
- Work experience - if you have none its worth considering to ensure you can show your interest whilst building key employability skills

Independent Travel

- Great time to go and explore
- Careful planning can ensure you save money
- Look to use a variety of different travel methods, coaches and trains can provide a cheaper option than flying and you get to see more of the countries you want to explore
- Make sure to check you have the correct visas and travel documents – don't get caught out!



Finally.....

- Don't leave it to the last minute to explore the options you have
- Keep an open mind and discuss what life looks like for you with family and friends
- Don't be afraid to ask questions
- Nothing is forever, you may change your mind this is fine if you know what might come next

If you would like any support with the options discussed today, arrange a time to discuss with Mrs Vernon



Any questions



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- Careers – Mrs Vernon
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- UCAS – Mrs Thompson
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