



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

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- 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 /<br>NVQ 5, 6, 7             |                                        |
| 6     | Bachelors degree<br>BA or BSc       |                                  |                                      |                                                    |                                        |
| 5     | Foundation degree<br>FdA or FdSc    | Higher National Diploma<br>(HND) |                                      |                                                    |                                        |
| 4     |                                     |                                  | Higher National<br>Certificate (HNC) | Higher<br>apprenticeship / NVQ 4                   |                                        |
| 3     | A levels<br>Grades A-E              | International<br>Baccalaureate   | T Levels                             | BTEC (extended) diploma<br>BTEC certificate        | Advanced<br>apprenticeship / NVQ 3     |
| 2     | GCSE<br>Grades 4- 9 (C, B, A or A*) |                                  |                                      | BTEC first diploma                                 | Intermediate<br>apprenticeship / NVQ 2 |
| 1     | GCSE<br>Grades 1- 3 (D,E,F or G)    |                                  |                                      | Foundation diploma /<br>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 £34.50 that needs to be paid to UCAS before the application can be processed.
- This is waived if students have been eligible for Free School Meals at any time in Secondary or are a Care Leaver
- 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.
- Medicine Students can only apply for four Medicine courses.
- Their fifth choice (if they make one) cannot be Medicine but it can be Medical Science related.

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

They have to do this by early May or all offers are declined by default.

**Important to note the distinction between Conditional and Contextual.**

# UCAS Key Dates.

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**15<sup>th</sup> October 2026**

## **Early Applications Deadline**

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

**7<sup>th</sup> December 2026**

## **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 for processing.

**13<sup>th</sup> January 2027**

## **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!

**13<sup>th</sup> May 2027**

## **Reject by default deadline**

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

**12<sup>th</sup> August 2027**

## **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                    | Competition is higher                     |
| High Expectations                                 | High Expectations                         |
| Prestige                                          | Less flexibility – e.g No part time work. |
| Specialisation & increased research opportunities | Higher chance of rejection                |

# 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 - 15<sup>th</sup> 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

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- **UCAT** - University Clinical Aptitude Test
- **LNAT** - National Admissions Test for Law
- **ESAT** – Engineering and Science Admissions Test
- **TMUA** – Test of Mathematics for University Admission
- TARA -
- **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

# 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 16<sup>th</sup> September
3. Book a test from 23<sup>rd</sup> June (Booking closes on the 16<sup>th</sup> September)
4. Tests are sat at Pearson Training centres from 13<sup>th</sup> July – 24<sup>th</sup> September
5. Test results are given to all students
6. There is no pass or fail – Just a graded score between 1.0 and 9.0
7. The closest for Ashford are – Canterbury, Chatham, Hastings & Tunbridge Wells.

## Key Exam Details

- **Structure:** The UCAT consists of four timed subtests:
  - **Verbal Reasoning:** 44 questions | 22 minutes
  - **Decision Making:** 35 questions | 37 minutes
  - **Quantitative Reasoning:** 36 questions | 26 minutes
  - **Situational Judgement:** 69 questions | 26 minutes

# LNAT

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•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

## Key Points

- It does not test existing legal knowledge.
- The exam is 2hrs 15 mins.
- 42 multiple choice questions from 12 argumentative passages.
- One essay from three broad debate topics.
- Testing starts on 1<sup>st</sup> September
- The cost is £75

# ESAT

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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

## Key Points

- All candidates sit a Mathematics module.
- Depending on the specific course, students will take two additional modules from Biology, Chemistry, Physics, or a 2<sup>nd</sup> Mathematics .
- Testing takes place between 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> October
- The cost is £75



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
- UCL

## Key Points

- All candidates sit a Mathematics module.
- 2.5 hour exam – Maths Knowledge and Maths reasoning
- Testing takes place in October
- The cost is £100

# TARA

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TARA is used evaluates a range of core academic abilities, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and written communication, rather than focusing on knowledge of any particular discipline

- UCL - Now
- Oxford –This Year
- London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) – Likely next year
- Cambridge – Likely next year
- Imperial – Likely in the future

# 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 £9,790)
- Maintenance Loans (Means tested – Maximum £14,135 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 2027 and ideally completed by May 2027. This is undertaken before University choice is confirmed.

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

# Bursary, grants and scholarships



There are at least 647 different bursary, scholarship or grant schemes available via UK Universities

[Search](#) | [UCAS](#)

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div><a href="#">Rest of UK (RUK) Bursary 2026-27</a></div> <div>Funding application deadline:<br/>28 Aug 2026</div> <div>University of Dundee</div> <div>£2,000.00</div>                                       | <div><a href="#">(RUK) Academic Excellence Bursary - 2026-27</a></div> <div>Funding application deadline:<br/>28 Aug 2026</div> <div>University of Dundee</div> <div>£3,000.00</div>                    | <div><a href="#">1st Formations Business Scholarship</a></div> <div>Funding application deadline:<br/>31 Jan 2027</div> <div>Bristol, UWE</div> <div>£500.00</div>                                         | <div><a href="#">2025-26 Business Scholarships</a></div> <div>Funding application deadline:<br/>None</div> <div>Hartpury University</div> <div>Between £2,000 to £3,500</div>      |
| <div><a href="#">2026-27 UG International Scholarships</a></div> <div>Funding application deadline:<br/>None</div> <div>Northumbria University, Newcastle</div> <div>£3000</div>                                | <div><a href="#">2026/27 UG International Scholarship for Nigerian Applicants</a></div> <div>Funding application deadline:<br/>None</div> <div>Northumbria University, Newcastle</div> <div>£6000</div> | <div><a href="#">2026/27 UG International Scholarship for South Asian Applicants</a></div> <div>Funding application deadline:<br/>None</div> <div>Northumbria University, Newcastle</div> <div>£4000</div> | <div><a href="#">24+ Scholarship</a></div> <div>Funding application deadline:<br/>01 Sep 2026</div> <div>SGS (South Gloucestershire and Stroud College)</div> <div>£4,000.00</div> |
| <div><a href="#">AberCares Bursary (for Care Leavers, Young Adult Carers, Refugees and Estranged Students)</a></div> <div>Funding application deadline:<br/>01 Sep 2026</div> <div>Aberystwyth University</div> | <div><a href="#">Aberdeen Global Scholarship - Undergraduate and PGDE</a></div> <div>Funding application deadline:<br/>08 Oct 2026</div> <div>University of Aberdeen</div>                              | <div><a href="#">Abertay IB30+ Scholarship</a></div> <div>Funding application deadline:<br/>31 Aug 2027</div> <div>Abertay University</div>                                                                | <div><a href="#">Abertay International Scholarship</a></div> <div>Funding application deadline:<br/>31 Aug 2027</div> <div>Abertay University</div>                                |

## Personal Statement

The person  
person beh

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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# Personal Statement Drop-in

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Students can always share their personal statements with us. The more that they do this and the earlier the better.

We have been offering Personal Statement drop-in sessions on Wednesday's during Enrichment since their Life After NKS Focus Day in May.

We are also offering drop-in sessions Wednesday, Thursday and Friday this week for anyone not on Work Experience

# ‘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

## Clearing

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**UCAS Clearing 2027 will open in July and run until mid October.**

**50,000 Students find their place through Clearing every year.**

### **Students use clearing if:**

- They are applying after 30 June
- They didn't receive any offers (or none they wanted to accept)
- They didn't meet the conditions of their offers
- **They have declined their firm place**

On results day they can see Clearing opportunities immediately but cannot add choices until 13:00 on the day.

# Reality vs Outcomes

No one institution or course is the same.

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



Offer rate for UK school & college leavers

47%

Students aged 17/18  
who applied to this  
course were offered a  
place.

Offer rate for UK school & college leavers

66%

Students aged 17/18  
who applied to this  
course were offered a  
place.

A Levels

Related courses >

30 course options

# Results Day

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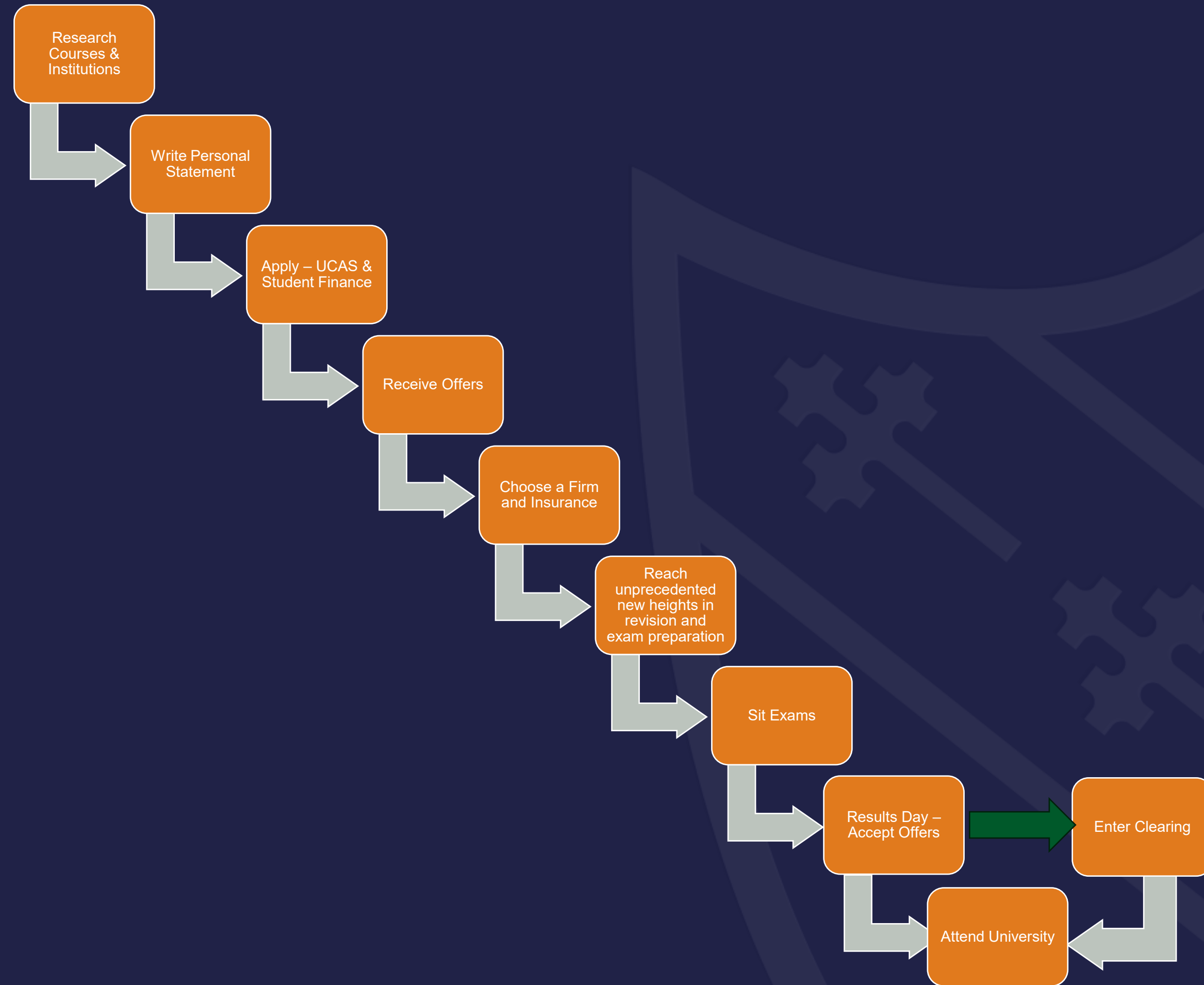
Having made a Firm and Insurance choice.

Students will receive an email on the morning of results day.

This will be:

- An offer from the Firm Choice
  - An offer from the Insurance Choice
  - No offer having been made by either.
- 
- Students will then attend school and collect their results and inform us of their destination.
  - Students can reject or accept any offer they are made.
  - If they are made no offers or they reject an offer they can then head into clearing.

# Summary Pathway



**Not considering  
University?**



**THE NORTON  
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**What are the options?**

# What are the options?

Apprenticeships

Internships

Traineeships

Gap Year

Employment

Independent Travel

# Apprenticeships

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- 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](http://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 2026 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>

# Apprenticeships - UCAS



★ Promoted

## [Network Engineer Apprentice](#)

BT

📍 Ipswich

Apprenticeship level  
England - Degree  
Apprenticeship - Level  
6

Salary  
£23,810

Industry  
Digital and IT

Apply by | Start date  
24/05/2026 |  
07/09/2026

★ Promoted

## [2026 Audit Apprenticeship](#)

KPMG

📍 Watford

Apprenticeship level  
England - Higher  
Apprenticeship - Level  
7

Salary  
£25,500 – 28,000

Industry  
Finance and  
accounting

Apply by | Start date  
31/05/2026 |  
01/10/2026

★ Promoted

## [2026 Audit Apprenticeship](#)

KPMG

📍 Southampton

Apprenticeship level  
England - Higher  
Apprenticeship - Level  
7

Salary  
£25,500 – 28,000

Industry  
Finance and  
accounting

Apply by | Start date  
31/05/2026 |  
01/10/2026

★ Promoted

## [2026 Audit Apprenticeship](#)

KPMG

📍 Reading

Apprenticeship level  
England - Higher  
Apprenticeship - Level  
7

Salary  
£25,500 – 28,000

Industry  
Finance and  
accounting

Apply by | Start date  
31/05/2026 |  
01/10/2026

★ Promoted

## [2026 Audit Apprenticeship](#)

KPMG

📍 Nottingham

Apprenticeship level  
England - Higher  
Apprenticeship - Level  
7

Salary  
£25,500 – 28,000

Industry  
Finance and  
accounting

Apply by | Start date  
31/05/2026 |  
01/10/2026

★ Promoted

## [2026 Audit Apprenticeship](#)

KPMG

📍 Newcastle

Apprenticeship level  
England - Higher  
Apprenticeship - Level  
7

Salary  
£25,500 – 28,000

Industry  
Finance and  
accounting

Apply by | Start date  
31/05/2026 |  
01/10/2026

★ Promoted

## [2026 Audit Apprenticeship](#)

KPMG

📍 Milton Keynes

Apprenticeship level  
England - Higher  
Apprenticeship - Level  
7

Salary  
£24,000 – 26,250

Industry  
Finance and  
accounting

Apply by | Start date  
31/05/2026 |  
01/10/2026

★ Promoted

## [2026 Audit Apprenticeship](#)

KPMG

📍 London

Apprenticeship level  
England - Higher  
Apprenticeship - Level  
7

Salary  
£25,500 – 28,000

Industry  
Finance and  
accounting

Apply by | Start date  
31/05/2026 |  
01/10/2026

# Internships

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- **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

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- Traineeships are short, work-based learning programs designed to support 16–24-year-olds gain practical skills and experience before entering full time work.
- A lot of these can be found on job sites.
- [Getmyfirstjob.co.uk](https://getmyfirstjob.co.uk) is also a good source of these.

# Gap Year

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- Essential to plan for your Gap Year well in advance
- The average cost of a Gap Year is between £3,500, £10,000
- Many companies will plan and arrange everything for you but can be costly. Examples are those such as:

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

[www.greenhearttravel.org](http://www.greenhearttravel.org)

[www.gap360.com](http://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
- It is also worth noting that it is really a gap 16 months.

# Independent Travel

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- 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!

# Employment

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- 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
- Create a Linked In account to start to network in areas of interest.

# 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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- General Enquiries – Mr Freear  
[dfreear@nks.kent.sch.uk](mailto:dfreear@nks.kent.sch.uk)
- Careers – Mrs Vernon  
[hvernon@nks.kent.sch.uk](mailto:hvernon@nks.kent.sch.uk)
- UCAS – Mrs Thompson  
[nthompson@nks.kent.sch.uk](mailto:nthompson@nks.kent.sch.uk)

