



MACCLESFIELD
COLLEGE

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HOW TO GUIDE:

UCAS APPLY AND PERSONAL STATEMENTS

THINKING ABOUT UNIVERSITY?

It can be a minefield trying to navigate all of the amazing variety of options available to you - this handbook aims to help you start your journey and guide you through the process to leave you feeling confident in your choices!

There are lots of reasons why you may choose university or alternative higher education after completing your Level 3 / Access course. It is crucial that you **spend time doing research** on your chosen subject/career pathway to make sure that you know *all* of the options available to you, and what you can expect when you start your studies.

It is really important that you seek guidance from your teachers, peers and parents/carers to make an informed decision and ensure you are suitably prepared for the next step - there are many positives about university but it does need your full commitment to get the best out of it.

Did you know?: *1 in 3 university applicants reported first thinking about Higher Education (HE) as early as primary school, and 83% of students will decide on their degree subject before their place of study.*

WHAT WILL YOU GAIN FROM A DEGREE?

- **Increase your knowledge** – study what you **enjoy** and be taught by experts within your chosen field
- **Get your first true taste of independence and freedom** – build self-confidence, experience all aspects of student life, **broaden your horizons** and meet new people
- **Gain a qualification that's internationally recognised** – UK higher education qualifications are accepted and respected by employers and academics **worldwide**
- **Develop the essential skills you'll need in your career and working life** – communication, organisation, time management, team work, **leadership**, problem-solving
- **Increase your earning potential** – the average salary for graduates is **30% higher than for non-graduates** aged 25-30, with the median starting salary set at £32,000 in 2022, and a rise in graduate vacancies.
- **Experience student life** – working hard is important but university is also fun! Whatever your interests, there are a huge range of clubs, societies and a diverse social life on offer

Home or accommodation? Full-time or part-time? Foundation year or sandwich year? A gap year or a study year abroad? University is a lot more flexible than you think with some benefits you may not have considered beyond the qual!

WHAT OTHER OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

From apprenticeships, degree apprenticeships and HNC/HND - University is no longer the only option for HE and may even work better for your career goals and way of learning.

HNC/HND

The **Higher National Certificate** (HNC) and **Higher National Diploma** (HND) is an alternative way of studying at degree level. The HNC is equivalent to a **Level 4**, and HND equivalent to a **Level 5**. There is then the option to 'top-up' your degree at a university to *complete your Level 6*. The benefits include:

- **Tailored approach** - most often, HNC and HND courses are taught in smaller groups, allowing for more support and direction than a larger university/course.
- **Familiarity** - if you studied your HNC/HND at your current college, it is most likely you have worked with your tutor and the facilities already. This can really help the transition to a higher level and build confidence.
- **Flexibility** - face-to-face teaching tends to be a maximum of two days meaning you can work around your degree in employment or with personal commitments, and because each year is separate, you can jump off at any time.
- **Costs** - the HNC/HND is significantly cheaper than university tuition fees, and as it is local can cut down on travel and accommodation costs.

WHAT OTHER OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships are an **alternative way** of *practically* gaining skills, experience and qualifications building on your subject knowledge.

An apprenticeship is a **real job** - you get paid, have a **contract** and *holiday leave*. During your apprenticeship you will spend **20% in education**, and will *complete assessments* across this time. Once the apprenticeship is completed, you can progress onto higher levels of apprenticeship, or **work and progress with the employer**.

Apprenticeships are available for a wide range of subjects.

Apprenticeships start at level 2 (Intermediate) and go up to...

DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

- Degree apprenticeships are **full time jobs with study**
- Have to be *at least* 12 months in duration
- **No student fees** and Apprenticeship pay.
- Programmes are co-designed, co-delivered, co-assessed and co-evaluated **with** employers
- Delivery models designed to suit specific employer and sector needs
- Varied models from *day release* to **block and blend**. Seasonal patterns defined with different sectors, e.g. Retail, Health
- Around 80% of degree apprentices stay with the same company. they study with and see **promotion** after and even *during* their studies.

Degree apprenticeships are advertised by the employer all year round and do not go through the same application process as a degree.

HOW TO GET STARTED ON YOUR RESEARCH

Once you've decided to look into University, there are some key things to consider:

WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU?

- **A course you enjoy** - *you will be investing your time and money into the course, and although the subject titles can be similar, every university will take a slightly different approach.*
- **The right progression** - *make sure that the course you are doing will open the doors you need for your future career. Speak with employers and professional organisations, and graduates within your field of study.*
- **Location** - *where do you see yourself living or travelling to for a minimum of three years? If you like the buzz of the city, you won't want to focus your search on rural areas - but be mindful of the cost of living as a result.*
- **Style of study** - *look into the modules and year-by-year breakdown when researching a course, and how you will be assessed. You can expect a mix of assessment styles such as group presentation, practical, coursework and dissertation.*
- **Extra-curricular, societies and support** - *.if you have interests outside of your studies, see what your university can offer! There are also student support mechanisms at each university that will be accessed in a different way to your college studies - see how they can help you*

HOW TO GET STARTED ON YOUR RESEARCH

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION

- **Go on a tour/open day** - *spend some time speaking to student ambassadors, tutors, seeing the facilities and visiting the surrounding area to get a real feel of the place. Some universities will even offer to refund your travel!*
- **Check their online resources** - *if you've got a lot of options lined up, take advantage of virtual tours and talks - it would even be good to do this for a university you may have initially written off, or for a contrast to your expected choice.*
- **Take the UCAS Careers quiz** - *know what subject interests you but not sure where it can lead? Use the UCAS careers quiz to inspire you and help guide you in the right direction.*
- **Sign up to UCAS Apply**- *UCAS is the one-stop shop for all things university and HE/Apprenticeship-related. Sign up to UCAS to make the most of the hub where you can watch talks, favourite courses and start drafting your personal statement.*
- **Going above and beyond** - *.One thing that will support your application is your personal statement. This is your opportunity to showcase your strengths and detail how you are suitable. Students who can show they have industry knowledge, work experience or volunteer will benefit from life experience in preparation for higher education.*

CHOOSING YOUR COURSE

It is imperative that you check the entry requirements before you apply for a course.

Unfortunately, some courses may have very specific entry requirements that you do not meet (e.g. A-Levels, GCSE grades, specific course).

Make sure you check all of this before using up one of your places.

UCAS admin fee

It does cost to apply - one choice is £22.50, and up to five choices is £27.50.

TARIFF POINTS

When looking at entry requirements, you may notice some courses mention **UCAS Tariff points**. These are gained through your studies - you can use the handy guide on the next page, or go to ucas.com/ucas/tariff-calculator

Guidance

We strongly recommend choosing at least three courses - you have a maximum of five. You will pick a **firm** and **insurance** choice once you have received all of your offers unless you get an unconditional offer - then you can only pick a *firm offer*.

If you *don't quite meet* the entry requirements, it would be worth **getting into contact with the university directly** and finding out whether your experience and knowledge would be taken into consideration. Alternatively, you could consider a **foundation year** - this is a university course to prime you ready for study.

BTEC L3 Ext Dip	
D*D*D*	168
D*D*D	160
D*DD	152
DDD	144
DDM	128
DMM	112
MMM	96
MMP	80
MPP	64
PPP	48

NFCE CACHE L3 Ext Dip	
A*	168
A	144
B	120
C	96
D	72

UAL L3 Ext Dip	
D	168
M	120
P	72

T-Levels	
Dist*	168
Dist	144
Merit	120
Pass (C or above on core)	96
Pass (D or E on core)	72

GETTING YOUR APPLICATION STARTED

SIGNING UP: UCAS APPLY

- **Register for September intake** - head to ucas.com, click the 'sign in' icon on the top right of the page and register your details. We recommend using a **personal email address** for this as you will need to access your account right up until the October in which you start your course.
- **Start adding your details** - once you've done your initial sign up and entered your verification, the portal will take you through a series of questions to help start your application and tailor your hub. You will be applying as an Undergraduate.
- **Add the 'buzzword'**- this links you to the College and allows your adviser to check that all of your details are correct before submission, and add your **tutor reference and predicted grades**. The buzzword is macclesfield, followed by the last two digits of the year you will be applying for e.g. for September 2024 start, the buzzword is **macclesfield24**
- **Save your favourite courses** - Once signed up, you can start adding courses to your favourites, so you can compare criteria and distance etc. This will also notify you of any useful events.
- **Start your personal statement** - this is by far the thing that most worries students, so you want to get started early and expect to re-draft a few times!

GETTING YOUR APPLICATION STARTED

COMMON MISTAKES

- **Not adding your previous education** - you should add **all** of your previous GCSEs held under your high school. If you have or are completing any of your GCSE Maths or English qualifications at College, they should go under the Macclesfield College section.
- **Putting a grade for your current course** - if you are completing a course at the College e.g Level 3 extended diploma, GCSE Maths, you do not need to put a final/predicted grade. This will be given by your tutor and added by the adviser.
- **Not adding your ULN/BTEC number**- this helps the universities access your results when you complete and support gaining your offer. Your teacher can provide you with your BTEC number if you are doing a BTEC course, and you can find your ULN in ProPortal under your details.
- **Incorrectly inputting your course title**- it's really important you get this right, as if it is sent off incorrectly you may gain or lose out on offers that won't be suitable for you. Check with your tutor that your course title is correct.
- **Not proofreading your personal statement** - this is a huge part of your application and demonstrates your ability to communicate, write academically and highlight your suitability. It's really important you spend time checking it is right

PERSONAL STATEMENT

WHY ARE 4,000 CHARACTERS (INCLUDING SPACES) IMPORTANT?

Your personal statement is an **opportunity** to *showcase* your knowledge, skills, experience and ambitions as well as give a glimpse into what makes you **unique**.

The personal statement itself is only 4,000 characters (47 lines) which includes spaces and punctuation - this is about a **side of A4 paper**. The personal statement has **no formatting option**, so it is key that you present yourself clearly and directly in this space.

The personal statement should focus on ***why*** you want to do the course, ***how*** you are suitable for study and ***what*** you can bring to the university. Any subject knowledge, experiences gained with and outside of college and **personal touches** go a long way.

You only have **one personal statement for your full application**, so you need to ensure it works to the courses you are applying for. It is possible to apply for a few different courses, however this may make tailoring your personal statement ***more challenging***.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

DOS AND DONT'S

- **Do: your research** - when you are reading through each course breakdown, make a note of some of the key phrases used and any requirements outlined for what makes a suitable candidate
- **Don't: waffle, or swallow a thesaurus** - you are very limited in your word count, so make sure you are clear and to the point. You should also make the statement authentic to you, so don't use elaborate language you wouldn't naturally use
- **Do: be positive and enthusiastic** - don't leave the reader in any doubt that you are passionate and ideal for your studies. One common mistake student make is using 'I think I am good at...'; instead, try 'I excel at...' Have confidence!
- **Don't: plagiarise or lie** - UCAS uses similarity detection software - don't borrow or use someone else's work. Similarly, don't make up things you have done/can do - you may be asked about it at interview/when you start.
- **Do: back up your points** - give examples as much as possible e.g. how are you a team player at work? What subject knowledge do you have?
- **Do: get someone to check it** - you will re-read and re-draft your statement multiple times. Make sure you get someone else to take a look to make sure you aren't missing any errors - they may even be able to provide some positive attributes about you that you hadn't thought of before! We recommend that you don't have too many different people helping you as they may have conflicting opinions.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

PLANNING

YOUR MOTIVATION

ACADEMIC ABILITY

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

PERSONAL

PERSONAL STATEMENT

GUIDANCE ON WHAT TO INCLUDE

There is no official guidance on exactly how a personal statement should be structured as it is exactly that - personal. However using the dos and don'ts in these pages and the headers across the page can help you get started and ensure you add important details.

- **Your motivation** - what do you want to get out of the course? what interests you about it? What qualities do you possess that would make you suitable? What do you hope to do with your degree?
- **Academic ability** - share your academic strengths and any challenges you have successfully overcome. Show off your subject-specific knowledge and any wider reading you have done
- **Relevant experience** - if you have had work experience, trips or visits, employment that can showcase your strengths and attributes be sure to add them with examples.
- **Personal** - what social activities, extra-curricular or hobbies do you have that you may want to pursue whilst at university? This could include volunteering, local charity work or even a talent/skill that is completely outside of your subject!

SENTENCE STARTERS:

- 'I have a keen interest in...'
- 'Something I am particularly proud of is...'
- '[course/work experience] has enhanced my experience/knowledge of...'
- 'Taking part in _____ has really helped me to...'

FINANCE AND ACCOMMODATION

The vast majority will opt for a loan to pay their tuition and maintenance fees, and most will use this opportunity to move away from home for the first time.

- **Tuition fees** - *this is the cost of studying your course (tuition) which is often around £9,000 per year. A student should be eligible for all support if they haven't previously started a degree. You will need to be a UK citizen or have 'settled' status, and have been living in the UK for three years before the start of the course. If you are unsure if you qualify, get into contact with Student Finance directly.*
- **Maintenance loan** - *this is a loan that covers your daily costs of study such as accommodation, bills, travel, food shop, materials etc. The amount is based on your annual household income and will also vary dependent on location (studying in or out of London) and moving out or staying at home.*
- **How to apply** - *For both loans, you will need to make an application to Student Finance England. This tends to open up in March of the year of study, and provides a deadline of the end of May. Your loan can be applied for up to 9 months after starting your course, but the deadline is placed to ensure your application is actioned ready for the start of your course.*

HOUSEHOLD INCOME	LIVING AT HOME	AWAY FROM HOME	AWAY FROM HOME LONDON
<£25,000	£7,747	£9,203	£12,010

FINANCE AND ACCOMMODATION

- **Bursaries and Grants** - *depending on a number of factors, you may be eligible for further support in the form of a bursary or grant. These vary from university to university, so do some research on what is available and how you can apply. Some may be awarded for talent or ability, ethnicity, financial background or exceptional grades.*
- **Other support** - *you may also be entitled to the disability support allowance, childcare and dependents grant and other support mechanisms. These will be identified through your Student Finance England application, but also during your UCAS application.*
- **Accommodation** - there are lots of different types of accommodation, and you'll need to apply for this in your own time. Each university will open up applications at different times of the year, so be sure to keep your eye out for this.

Dependent on whether you are living in a city or town, on campus or out, private or university-ran, en-suite or not will make huge differences to the price - make sure you fully consider what is accessible to you before making your choice.

GLOSSARY

Adviser – someone who provides you with information, advice, and support with your application. This could be a teacher, tutor, counsellor, or agent.

Buzzword – It's a word you add to your application when you register to make a UCAS Undergraduate application (unless you're applying independently).

Changed course offer – in your application, you might get one of these if you haven't met your conditions, or if the university or college has made changes to the courses they run. It might involve a different start date or point of entry, or a different course altogether.

Clearing – in a UCAS Undergraduate application, Clearing is another service you can use to look for alternative courses. If you didn't get a place on a course – whether you didn't receive offers, declined your offers, or didn't get the grades you needed – Clearing allows you to apply for courses that still have vacancies.

Conditional offer – in your application, an offer of a place on a course subject to conditions. To be accepted on the course, you'll need to meet the conditions – usually related to your exam results. This is a common type of offer for students applying directly from further education.

Conservatoire – a provider of performance-based music, dance, screen, and drama courses.

Deferral – in your application, this is what you do if you'd like to carry an offer over to start it in the following academic year.

Entry requirements – this is what the course provider recommends you need to do/have to get on the course – from qualifications and specific subjects or grades, to interviews, admissions tests, and medical requirements. You aren't guaranteed an offer if you meet or already have these.

Extra – in a UCAS Undergraduate application, Extra is a service you can use to apply for alternative places if you do not hold an offer from your first five choices.

GLOSSARY

Firm choice – in your application, an offer you accept as your first choice.

Higher education (HE) – the level of education we can help you apply to – from undergraduate courses when you've finished further education, to postgraduate courses you can move on to after graduating from an undergraduate degree.

Insurance choice – in your application, an offer you accept as your second choice – just in case you don't meet the conditions of your firm offer.

Personal ID or UCAS ID – the ten-digit number you get when you begin an application – displayed in 123-456-7890 format on every email we send you.

Point of entry – in your application, which year of the course you start at – for example '2' means you'd start in the second year of the course.

Predicted grades – the grades a teacher, tutor, or other adviser qualified to remark on a student's academic suitability believes they will achieve when they complete their secondary qualification.

Referee – in your application, someone who provides a reference for you. Reference is a recommendation on an applicant's application from a teacher

Sandwich course – a course with an additional year where you work in the profession you're studying for.

Tariff – the UCAS Tariff is the system for allocating points to the different qualifications you can use to get into undergraduate higher education. It is for use in admissions only and is not transferable to the job market.

Unconditional offer – in your application, an offer of a place on a course with no conditions – the place is yours if you want it.

Undergraduate – the first level of study in higher education. If you graduate from an undergraduate degree, you can move on to postgraduate study.











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GOT ANY QUESTIONS?
Send your queries to
studentservices@macclesfield.ac.uk