

Applying to university: informed choices and making a competitive application

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To include:

- How to make an informed choice
- Competitive universities
- How to make your application competitive



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How to make an informed decision

Choose the right course at the right place for you



What do you enjoy?

- Subjects at school
- Hobbies
- Sport
- Music
- Part-time job
- Where do you want to end up?



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Is the subject right for you?



- Visit associated facilities and take notes, e.g. Law courts
- Follow articles in broadsheet newspapers
- Apply for work experience
- Attend open days to learn more about course



MORE THAN
80%
OF EMPLOYERS
DON'T SPECIFY
A SUBJECT AREA

**HEPI, 2023*



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What degree did these applicants hold?

- Analyst
- Buyer
- Editorial Assistant
- Policy Adviser
- Recruitment Consultant
- Underwriter
- Teacher



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HISTORY





How about these careers?

- Business Development Manager
- Consultant
- Financial Analyst
- Quality Control Analyst
- Tax Associate
- Music Producer



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CHEMISTRY

What about the university?

Where do you want to be?

- Do they offer the course?
- Do you meet the entry requirements?
- Distance
- Accommodation

- Does it feel right?



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What can the university offer you?

- Careers advice
- Placement opportunities
- Support
- Societies
- Sport
- Study abroad



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The detective work

- Prospectuses
- Websites
- Social Media
- Visits
- League tables



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What makes universities /
courses competitive?



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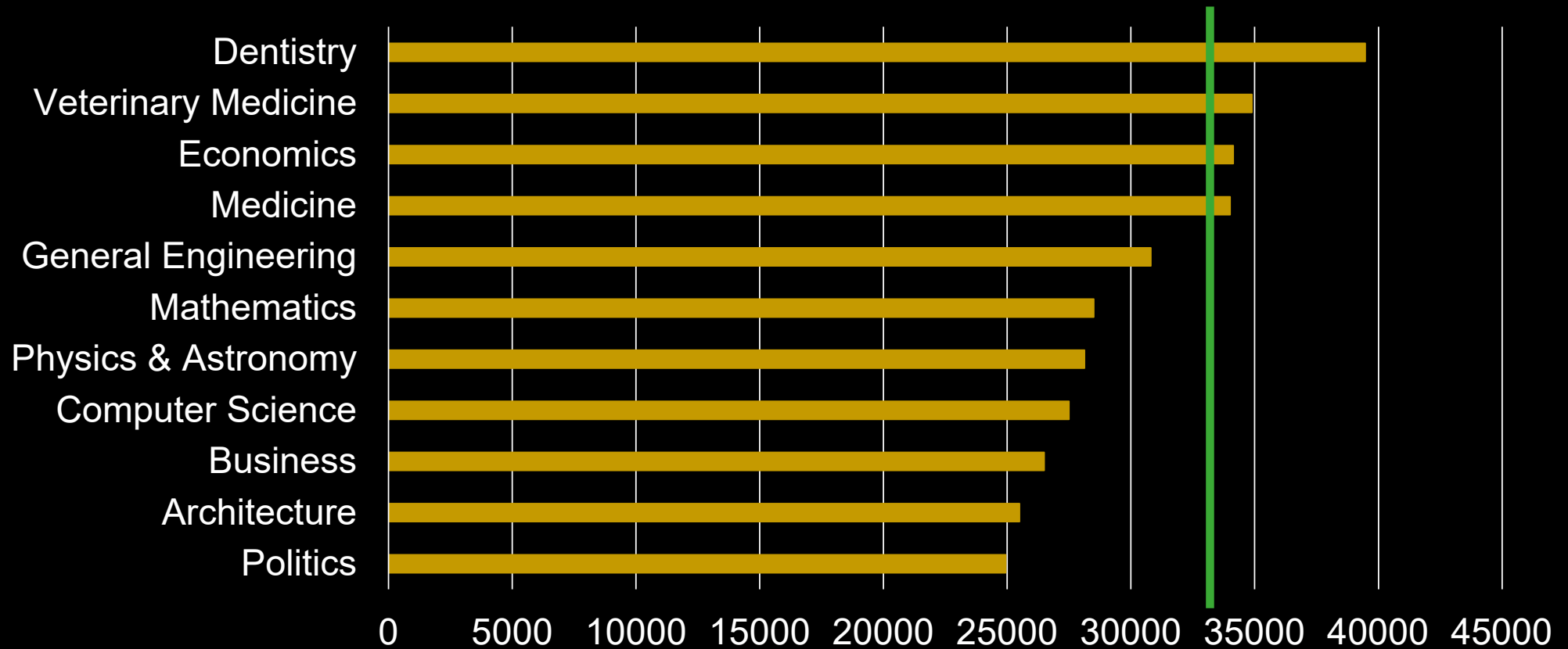


- More applicants than places
- Global competition
- Smaller number of places
- Niche subject / what university is known for
- Reputation
- League table position
- Trend / popularity
- Salary potential



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Highest graduate average starting salaries



Average = £33,500



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High Fliers Report: The Graduate Market 2023

Table 4.6 Universities Targeted by Largest Number of Top Employers in 2022-2023

	<i>Ranking in 'Good University Guide' *</i>		<i>Ranking in 'Good University Guide' *</i>
1. Manchester	24	11. Oxford	1
2. Nottingham	30	12. London King's College	26
3. Birmingham	20	13. Exeter	13
4. Bristol	15	14. London School of Economics	4
5. Warwick	9	15. Edinburgh	10
6. Leeds	23	16. Bath	8
7. London University College	7	17. London Imperial College	5
8. Cambridge	3	18. London Queen Mary	36
9. Durham	6	19. Sheffield	21
10. Southampton	16	20. Glasgow	14

Source - The Graduate Market in 2023

* The Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide 2023

https://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2023/graduate_market/GMReport23.pdf



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The Russell Group

- Research informed teaching
- Great opportunities and facilities
- Excellent employment prospects on graduation



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Who are not part of the Russell Group?



Imperial College
London



Who are not part of the Russell Group?



The Russell Group

- University of Birmingham
- University of Bristol
- University of Cambridge
- Cardiff University
- Durham University
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Exeter
- University of Glasgow
- Imperial College, London
- King's College, London
- University of Leeds
- University of Liverpool
- London School of Economics
- University of Manchester
- Newcastle University
- University of Nottingham
- University of Oxford
- Queen Mary University of London
- Queen's University, Belfast
- University of Sheffield
- University of Southampton
- University College London
- University of Warwick
- University of York



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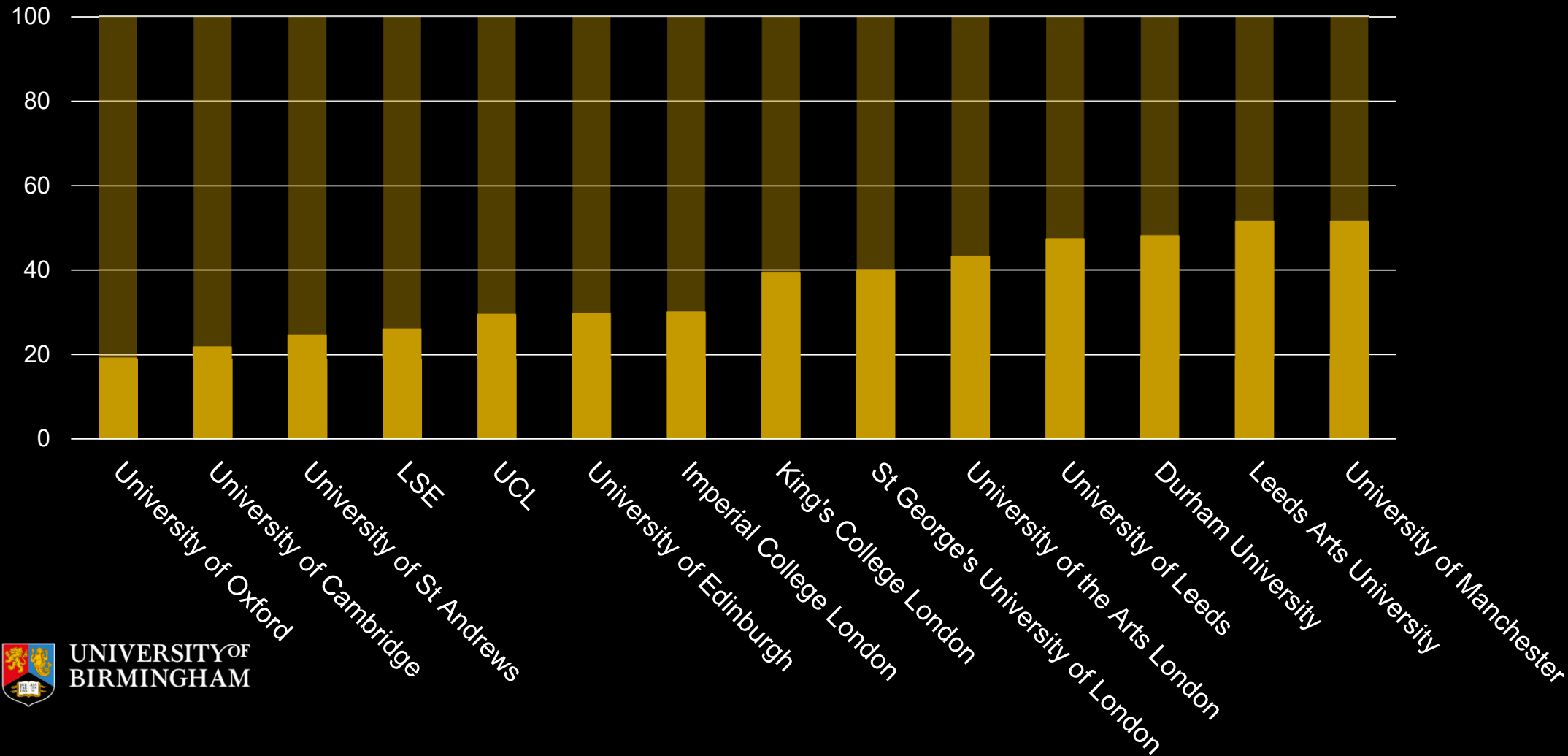
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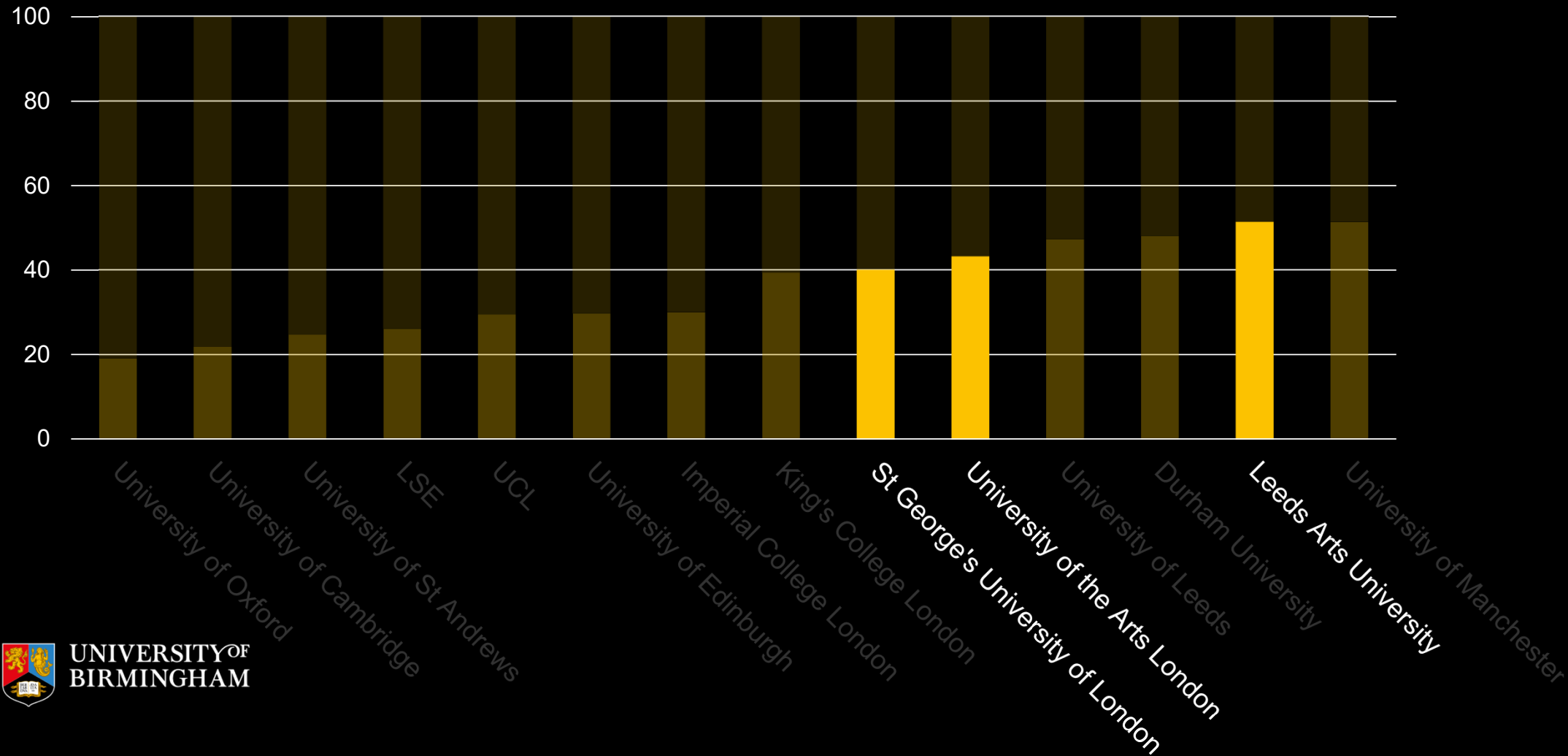
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Competitive universities? Percentage of applicants who get in.



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Competitive universities? Percentage of applicants who get in.



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Most popular subjects 2023

- Biological and Sports Sciences
- Business Management
- Computer Science
- Design and Creative Arts
- Engineering and Technology
- Law
- Medicine and Dentistry
- Psychology
- Social Sciences
- Subjects allied to Medicine



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So, what does this mean if you want to study at a competitive university?

- More applicants than places available
- Ability to cope with academic demands of the course
- Require good grades at GCSE (6 - 9) and A Level (A*, A, B)
- Academic achievement / ability in the subject / portfolio



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Making a competitive application



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What are universities looking for? A Computer Science example...

A* Maths

A Physics

A Economics

Applicant 1

A* Maths

A Physics

A Business

Applicant 2

A* Maths

A Computer
Science

A Modern
Languages

Applicant 3





What are universities looking at?

1. Predicted grades
2. GCSE results
3. Do you meet any other requirements?
4. Personal statement
5. References



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The Personal Statement



- Get to know who you are
- See your passion and enthusiasm
- Work experience



The basics

- ✓ You can only write 1 personal statement
- ✓ 4,000 characters or 47 lines, whichever comes first
- ✓ All applications are processed online
- ✓ UCAS has no spelling or grammar check
- ✓ You can't use **bold**, underlining or *italics*
- ✓ UCAS has similarity detection software



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What do Admissions Tutors want?



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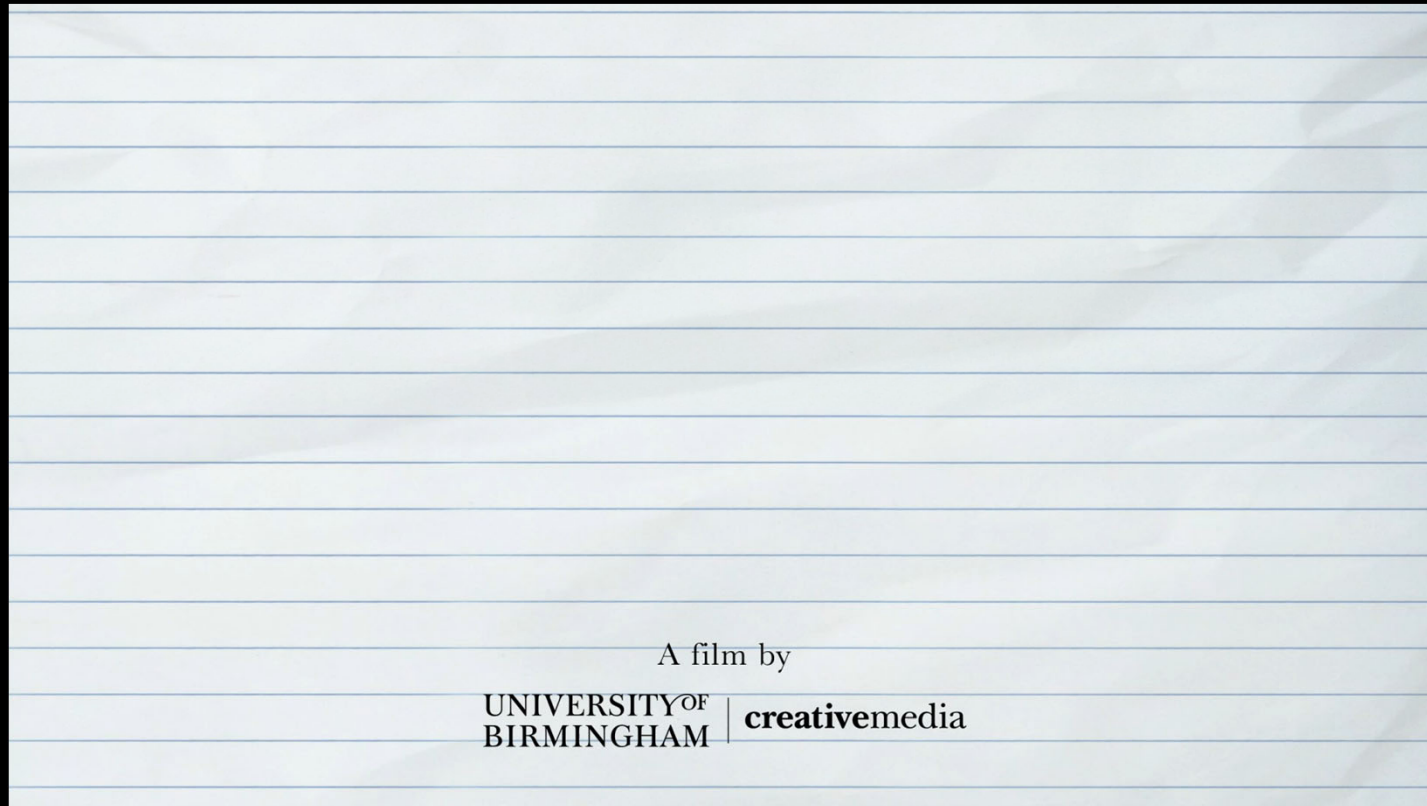
What they are looking for

- Apply in time
- Meet entry requirements
- Passion for the subject
- Where your interest stemmed from
- Additional activities and interests



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Don't just take it from me...



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLokG6bhPCw>



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Five key questions

1. Why are you applying for your chosen course?
2. Why does this subject interest you?
3. Why do you think you're suitable for the course?
4. Do your current/previous studies relate to the course you have chosen?
5. Have you taken part in any activities that demonstrate your interest?



Personal statement checklist

- Reasons for course/subject choice
- What you enjoy in any related subjects now
- Current affairs / reading around the subject / MOOCs / TED / Gresham lectures / podcasts
- Career goals / what hope to gain
- Interests / hobbies
- School experience – positions of responsibility, competitions
- Involvement in Higher Education activities
- Work experience / employment / voluntary work
- Skills / personal qualities relevant to the course
- Gap year information, if applicable
- Motivation - Commitment - Enthusiasm



Key skills for healthcare

- Sound academic background and study skills
- Interest in science
- Physical stamina
- Manual dexterity
- Desire to help people
- Cope with pressure
- Excellent communication skills
- Teamwork
- Self-motivation
- Patience
- Ability to relate to different people
- Friendly, polite and helpful attitude towards people
- Ability to cope with anxious or difficult patients
- Ability to gain trust and put patients at ease
- Thorough and methodical approach and pay attention to detail
- Ability to work long hours



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Key skills for Law / Humanities

- Enjoy reading and reflection
- Curiosity about law
- Correct use of words
- Enthusiasm for discussion
- Able to extract/manipulate information
- Able to critically analyse written material
- Able to find solutions to dilemmas
- Research and writing skills
- Enjoy listening, arguing, debating, negotiating
- Able to present ideas
- Logical approach to factual situations
- Appreciation of ethical & moral dimensions
- Ability to think under pressure
- Awareness of the political scene
- Self-motivation and time management
- Intellectual curiosity



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Get involved



- Keep a note of musical and sporting activities
- Consider volunteering



- Consider paid work - balance
- Work experience may be required by some courses



- Make time for extra-curricular activities, sleeping, and having fun!



Do your research

- Understand the course
- Identify key skills
- Plan any reading or activities to support your application



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Writing your personal statement



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Most frequent opening sentences

- “From a young age I have (always) been...”
- “For as long as I can remember I have ...”
- “I am applying for this course because ..”
- “I have always been interested in ...”
- “Throughout my life I have always enjoyed ..”
- “Reflecting on my educational experiences ..”
- “Nursing is a very challenging and demanding (career / profession / course) ...”
- “Academically, I have always been ...”
- “I have always wanted to pursue a career in ..”
- “I have always been passionate about ..”



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An example

Ancient history, for me, is about connecting with distant generations from all walks of life. It is an interest that goes beyond the great historical set pieces. I love the human side of the subject, from the baker producing his last loaf in Pompeii to the third century Roman complaining about the theft of his bath robe on a curse tablet. I am intrigued by the minutiae of ancient life and mythology, how societies developed and how attitudes changed. We can learn so much by exploring historical contexts, and recognising their relevance to the present.

In my Extended Project Qualification which looks at the role of women in Ancient Rome, I have increased my understanding of how women both broke convention and conformed to achieve power. Through this I have honed research skills such as prioritising information, recognising bias in articles and assessing the value of historical sources - all of which I look forward to applying at university.



Important to remember

- **LESS** of what you have done
- **MORE** of what you got out of it



Structuring paragraphs

ACTIVITY

What you have done

GOOD

BENEFIT

What skills it has given you

BETTER

COURSE

How these relate to your course

BEST





Make the most of you

“I was captain of the school football team and have always been good at sports.”

“As captain of the school football team, I have developed excellent team working skills. I also feel that playing football has provided me with the experience of successfully balancing my academic and social life and I plan to continue this balance whilst at university.”



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Make it interesting

- Some admissions tutors receive 100s of UCAS forms
- What sets you apart from the rest?
- Try to avoid the usual/bland sentences
- But be careful...



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Don't go over the top...

“... and when I'm not working towards World Peace, I enjoy learning languages from scratch, writing symphonies and playing a standard of golf that Tiger Woods can only dream about.”



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You also don't want to...

- Use words you don't understand
- Talk about irrelevant things
- Lie – you may be questioned at interview
- Copy or download a personal statement
- Leave it too late



You only get one chance to make a first impression...

- At least 80% should concentrate on course/subject related issues
- Consistent course choice
- Grammar / spelling / vocabulary
- Take your time
- Research
- Don't copy
- Don't start every sentence with 'I'
- No lists (analyse your experiences)

Be **specific**
Be **honest**
Be **positive**
Be **selective**



Top Tips

- Start researching early
- Check the entry requirements
- Prepare for your personal statement – explore your interests
- Know your deadlines
- Visit, where possible
- Put in the effort



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And soon enough this
will be you at your
chosen university...



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Thank you for listening

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Saturday 5 October

Saturday 9 November

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