



**DEAN CLOSE**  
SCHOOL  
CHELTENHAM

# UCAS PARENTS PRESENTATION 2024

# WHAT IS UCAS?



- Service that manages the vast majority of applications to UK universities.
- It sends completed applications to universities, communicates their responses and automatically shares pupils' A Level results with the institutions they have selected so they can review whether the pupils have met the conditions of any offers they hold.
- There is a charge for the service, it is £28.50, and pupils can either pay using a card at the time of submitting their application or choose for this to be added to their school bill.



# THE MAIN SECTIONS OF A UCAS APPLICATION:

## Pupil Sections:

- Personal Details: DoB/Contact Details/Language Background/Visa Background
- More About You: including learning needs/other disabilities/armed forces
- Education: list all achieved qualifications (both GCSE/other) plus pending A Level qualifications
- Employment/Extra Activities
- Personal Statement: 4,000 characters or 47 lines. Only one statement that is sent to all choices.

# THE MAIN SECTIONS OF A UCAS APPLICATION CONTINUED:

## School Sections:

- Choices: up to 5 at the start of the application process and later narrowed down to 2.
- Reference: Was reformed for 2024 entry. Three boxes - 1. A template outlining the school context. 2. Any extenuating circumstances. 3. Academic comments indicating student aptitude for the course they have chosen.
- Predicted Grades: based upon ongoing attainment and end of year exams. Optimistic, but realistic. Pupils should not 'get stuck' on this during the application process.
- This side of the application that is not visible to students/parents on the website but I complete a 1:1 collaborative review before the application is sent off.

## KEY MOMENTS IN THE UCAS TIMELINE:

- Completed applications can be sent off from the 3rd September 2024.
- 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024 is the early entry deadline for applications to Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary to be sent off.
- 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025 is the equal consideration deadline. After this date, universities can close courses to applicants, so we consider this to be the final deadline.
- Music Conservatoire application deadline is the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024, and Dance/Drama/Musical Theatre Conservatoire applications have a deadline of the 29th January 2025. Can submit BOTH a Conservatoire and a UCAS application.



# CHOICES & OFFERS

- Choices: advised to apply to a range of entry requirements, ranging from aspirational to safe (Unifrog is another tool provided by the school that pupils can use to explore their options).
- Another key recommendation is to use both general league tables as well as subject specific league tables to identify choices as sometimes these do not fully align.
- The choices are not entered in any order of preference when applying and it is a 'blind' application.
- Entry requirements come in either listed grades or tariff points, where different grades are equivalent to various points totals. (<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/tariff-calculator>)
- Universities have until mid-May to respond to applicants (if they fail to do so, it is unsuccessful by default) and pupils have until early June to decide which they will have as their 'Firm' (1<sup>st</sup>) and 'Insurance' (2<sup>nd</sup>) choices. The Insurance choice should have a lower entry requirement than the Firm.
- The responses an applicant can receive on UCAS are as follows:
  - Unconditional Offer (applicant can study at the university almost regardless of the outcomes of their A Levels).
  - Conditional (applicant can progress to study at the university if they meet the conditions of offer)
  - Unsuccessful (rejection)

# SUPPORTING OUR PUPILS THROUGH THE PROCESS:

- Last Thursday – trip the UCAS Discovery Exhibition
- 1:1 discussions in Tutorials to help foster pupil aspirations and plans.
- Encouraged to go on Open Days: <https://dcslibrary.com/post18>
- Encouraged to undertake work experience (up to 5 days during term-time).
- Signed up to Unifrog – encourage pupils to think about what is important to them in determining where they want to apply.
- Trinity Term: Futures Days will include workshops for Personal Statements, sessions with visitors from various universities and professional destinations to discuss student/working life, opportunities to practice interview questions and finetune CVs. This year, we are planning to take students to an Open Day.
- September interview with Mr Salisbury, Mr Wilkes and myself.
- Weekly UCAS Clinic where they can drop in for help and guidance.
- Coordinators for specific applicant groups.
- Each application is individually reviewed and checked by their Housemaster/mistress, and each pupil meets with me 1:1 to send it off to ensure there are no inaccuracies.
- Ongoing guidance for choice selection and on Results Day.

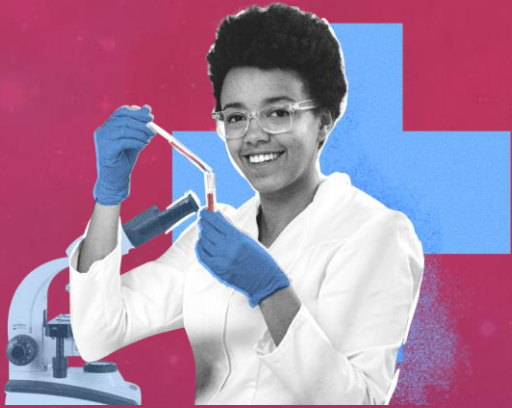




# OXBRIDGE (LED BY MR MILNE)

- Successful applicants are individuals who are proactive and use their initiative as part of preparation.
- Engagement in super-curricular – this means extension beyond the curriculum in topic areas that are of interest. This should be a critical engagement and could be through articles, documentaries, podcasts, radio shows, essay competitions etc. Pupils should ask their subject teachers and also look at the suggested reading lists provided on the respective websites. Supported by a weekly group session led by Mr Milne and members.
- For some courses, aptitude tests are required and pupils will need to be registered for these. They typically are free to be entered for and can be sat at school. Awaiting on updates after technical difficulties this year but please note they can sometimes be during the October half term (DCS can still hold them even if this is the case).
- We advise pupils to look at all of the courses on offer as they range vastly in how competitive they are: for example, Computer Science at Oxford has had a 5% success rate for the last 3 years, whereas Theology has had a 41% success rate. Similarly, at Cambridge Natural Sciences has a 20% success rate whereas Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic is at 50%.
- Practice interviews are arranged for pupils to foster their understanding of the tutorial style teaching.





# MEDICINE/DENTISTRY/VETERINARY (LED BY MR NEEDS)

- Again, as places are highly competitive, applicants who are proactive and well-prepared are most successful.
- Similar engagement in super-curricular – extension and critical engagement beyond the curriculum in related areas. Pupils should work with key Biology and Chemistry staff and should be attending Mr Needs' weekly extension group. Useful advice can be found via Mr Needs' guides @ <https://dcslibrary.com/medvetdent>, alongside many online resources and organisations that support.
- Many courses require an aptitude test and most will require pupils to be registered for these from mid-September. Typically, pupils register for these independently and they are sat at Pearson testing centres for a charge.
- Due to the high demand for places, we advise pupils to look at how various providers prioritise different parts of their application and play to their strengths. For each degree type, pupils can choose up to four destinations (out of 5 choices). The fifth choice can be used for an aligned subject, which is often a fall-back choice. It is not unusual for pupils to not succeed in their applications first time round and many choose to reapply in the following year.
- Practice interviews as well as an MMI (multiple medical interview) event are provided to support applicants.

# KEY PEOPLE



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Zach Suckle – Head of Futures (also Apprenticeships)

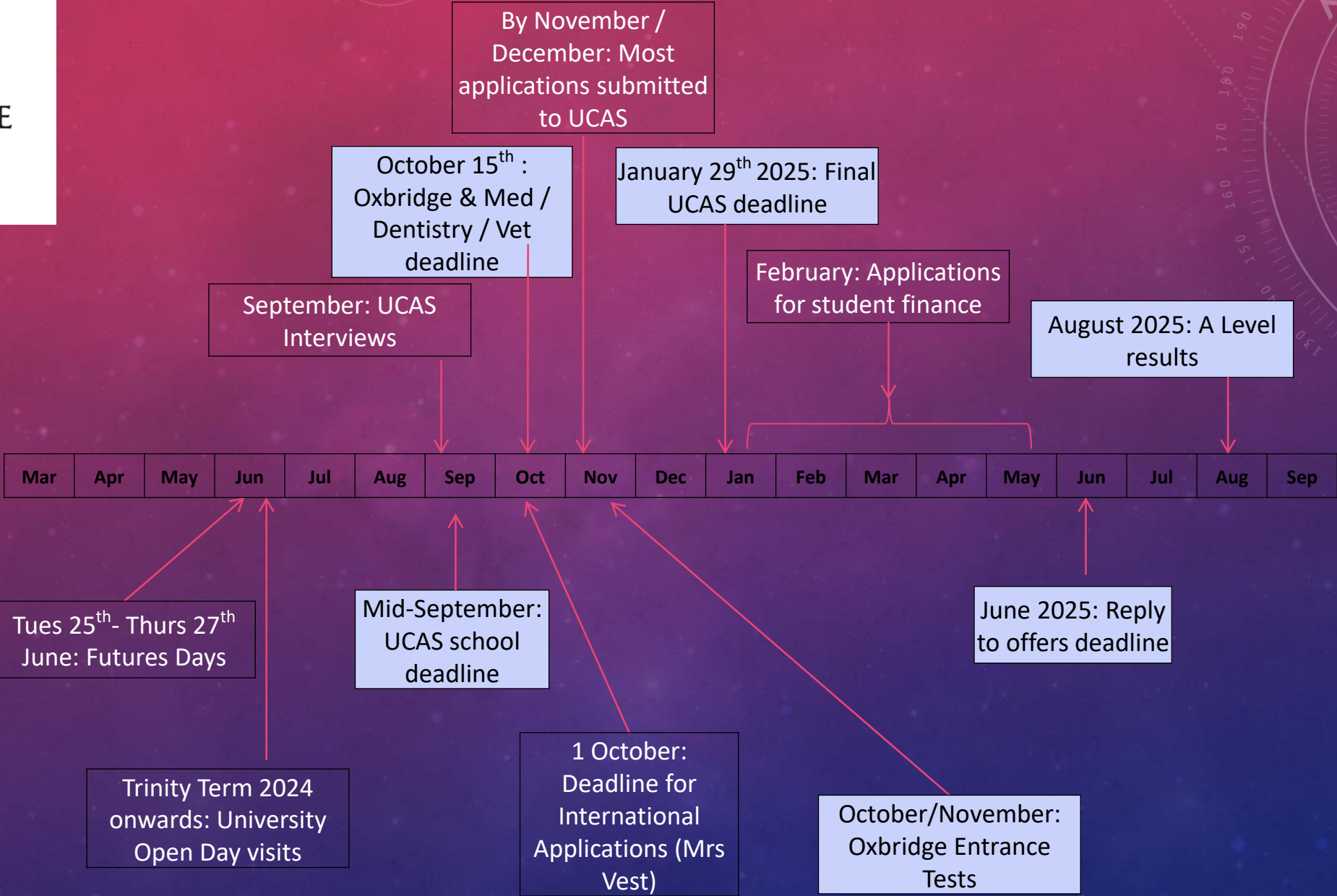
Rachael Vest – International Universities

Aron Needs – Medicine/Dentistry/Veterinary/Biomedical

Alastair Milne – Oxbridge Co-Ordinator

Claire Barley – Higher Education Co-Ordinator





# WHAT SHOULD PUPILS BE DOING NOW?

Lower Sixth pupils likely fall into one of three stages:

**The Indecisive Stage** – unsure of what they want to do and tendencies to postpone decisions until later; often lack super-curricular or employability elements; may see themselves as going with the flow, but have yet to actively think decisively about what they want from their next steps

**The Exploring Stage** – actively exploring degrees, apprenticeships and destinations via Unifrog, UCAS.com; talking to specialists and advice network; starting to develop general super-curricular elements and employability through activities, projects, reading and work experience

**The Focused Stage** – clear idea of type of course and type of destination; narrowing down finer details; engaging in valuable super-curricular activities and reading; obtained work experience with further placements planned.

Unless already in the Focused stage, pupils' current objective should be to move up to the next level.