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# Guide to UK Universities









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## UK Universities: In a Nutshell

- ◇ High-ranking globally
- ◇ International cohorts
- ◇ Apply directly to the course
- ◇ Focused on specific subjects/ disciplines
- ◇ World-leading research departments
- ◇ Life on-campus in first year, then shared housing
- ◇ Tuition fees are lower than US; higher than Europe

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# Application Overview

Oct	<p><b>15 October</b> Application deadline for Oxford and Cambridge</p> <p>Application deadline for most courses in medicine, veterinary medicine/ science, and dentistry</p>
Jan	<p><b>15 January</b> Application deadline for the majority of undergraduate courses. Offers will come in from the point of applying until before 1 May. Some university offers will require a response, so students should check UCAS regularly.</p>
May	<p><b>1 May</b> If you receive all decisions/ offers by 31 March, reply by 1 May.</p> <p><b>2 May</b> All university decisions due for applications submitted by 15 January.</p>
Jun	<p><b>6 June</b> If you receive all decisions from universities by 2 May, reply by 6 June.</p> <p><b>20 June</b> If you receive all decision by 6 June, reply by 20 June</p>
Jul & Aug	<p><b>5 July</b> Clearing opens</p> <p>IB &amp; A Level Results are released (<b>July and August</b>)</p>



# Why Study in the UK?

- ◇ High quality education at internationally top ranked institutions
- ◇ Curriculum supporting learning breadth as well as depth
- ◇ Popular with international students, with many campuses boasting student diversity



## Top Quality Education

The UK boasts top universities like Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial, UCL, Edinburgh and Durham. We have 3 in the global top 10, over 30 in the global top 200 and ~90 in the global top 1,000. Considering the UK is such a small country, its university reputation is outstanding. A UK degree is recognised by employers globally.



## Student Satisfaction

Students report at least 90% satisfaction with their experience in the UK. The UK has the highest international student experience satisfaction ratings for English-speaking countries. The UK is popular with international students from all over the world.



## International

Nearly 20% of students at UK universities are from outside the UK, according to the British Council. Additionally, almost 30% of academic staff at UK universities are international, coming from ~180 different countries.

## What about Brexit?

British universities are international communities and won't stop being so as a result of Brexit. However, fees may change, so our advice is to research and speak to your university.



# Different Types of Degree

When choosing a university in the UK, the most important consideration is the type of course you want to study. There are different types of degree offered in the UK: honours degrees, foundation degrees, and diplomas. Foundation degrees are training degrees of a less academic nature and relate to vocational areas. Diploma courses are at a lower level than degree courses; successful completion of the first year or two of such courses can lead on acceptance on to an honours degree.

## Training

These are degrees that train students to do a particular type of work (such as medicine, education or engineering). This type of degree is associated with higher employment rates and higher graduate starting salaries. The highest rate of employment, as reported by HESA (the Higher Education Statistics Agency) is for students graduating with a degree in medicine, subjects allied to medicine, Biological sciences and Veterinary sciences.

CAREER-READY

Examples:

- Medicine
- Education
- Engineering
- Architecture
- Veterinary Science

## Vocational

These degrees impart skills that are useful to a particular area of employment, but are not the only entry route to that type of work. Employment rates for graduates will vary according to subject area, course, and university. If a work placement is included in the course (this is often called a 'sandwich' course) this will almost certainly improve future employment prospects.

EMPLOYMENT FOCUSED

Examples:

- Business studies
- Law
- Graphic design
- Hospitality

## Sciences

Science at university goes well beyond biology, chemistry and physics: there are over 10,000 different science and engineering-based courses. Many courses offer a Masters degree as part of a 4 year program, which enable candidates to access a huge range of science related careers. E.g. you could be a forensic scientist with a biology/ chemistry background, and physics is a smart option if you want to be a sound engineer.

IN-DEMAND SKILLS

Examples:

- Physics
- Electrical engineering
- Astrophysics

## Humanities / Arts

These degrees are widely considered to prepare students well for thinking and analysis. Humanities and social science subjects also may support development in negotiation, debate and research skills. These are all highly transferable skills and can lead to careers in many different areas, such as business, marketing, psychology and law.

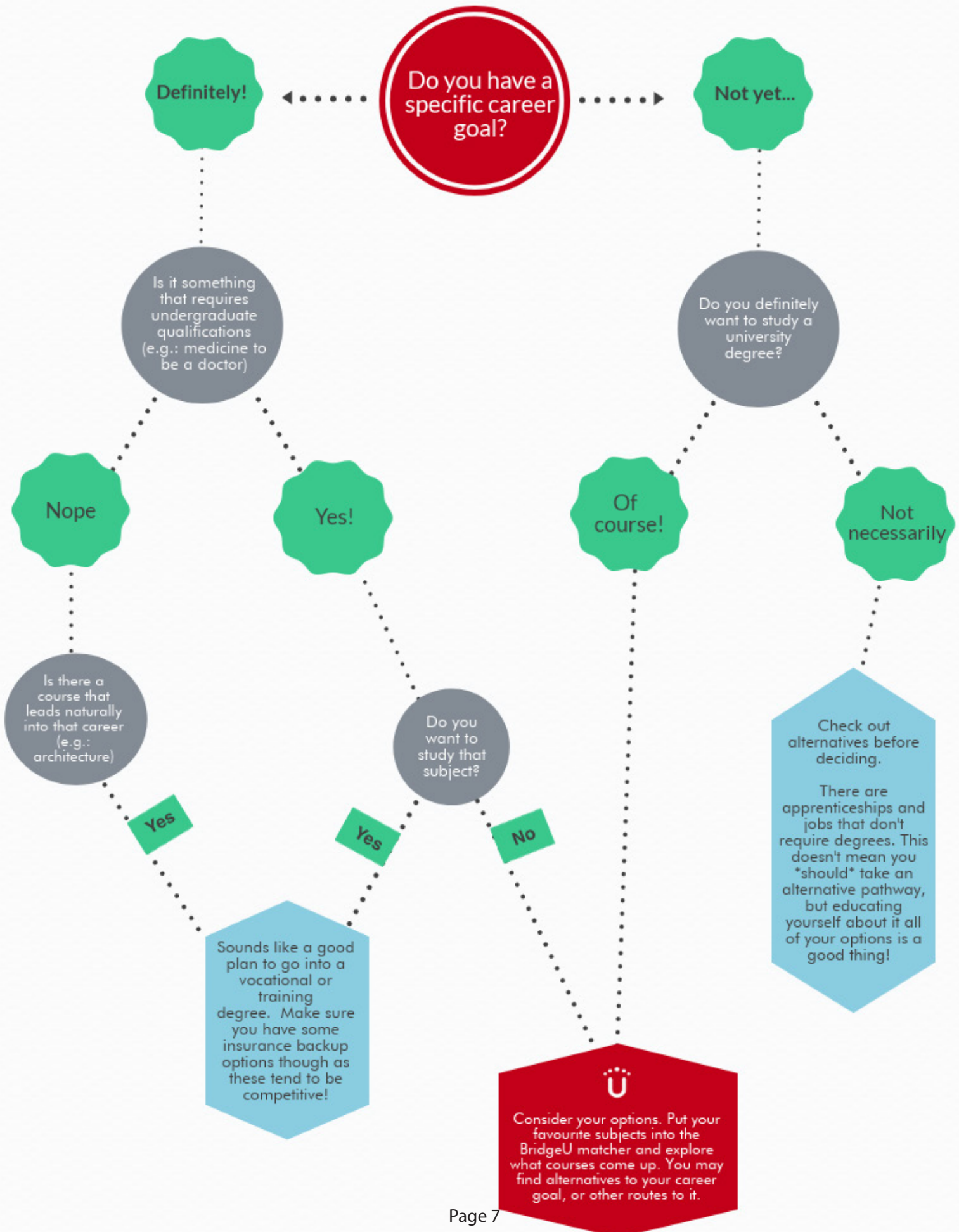
TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Examples:

- History
- English Literature
- Liberal Arts
- Classics



# Which Degree Type for You?



# Understanding Entry Requirements



In the UK, universities will typically specify 'minimum entry requirements'. This means that these are the minimum grades they expect to be achieved by successful applicants. You can apply with lower predicted grades, but it's not advised.

Your Grades	Entry Requirements
A Levels	This may be expressed as either three grades (e.g. AAB), or have specific subject requirements. For example: "AAB, with A in Physics". Some universities will express flexibility in their A Level requirements, e.g.: "BBB. Candidates with ABC or A*CC also meet these requirements".
BTECs	This may be expressed as either BTEC grades (e.g.: "DD" or "Distinction, Distinction, Distinction"). Your eligibility for the course may depend on whether you are doing the BTEC 90-Credit Diploma, Subsidiary Diploma, Certificate, National Diploma or Extended Diploma. Universities will specify what they accept. In some cases, BTECs entry requirements can be combined with A level entry requirement options to show flexibility from the university (e.g. "If taking BTEC Applied Science, A Level Biology not required").
PreUs	This may be expressed as scores (e.g.: D1) or specifying a subject that score is achieved in (e.g. D2 in French).
UCAS Points	This is a points system that converts different grades into an overall mark (e.g.: 280 UCAS Tariff points). In some cases, the university will ask only for the points, in others, they'll specify where the points need to come from (e.g. "at least 2 A Levels").
IB	This may be expressed as an overall score (e.g.: 36), but often there will be requirements either on the subjects taken at Higher Level, or the grades achieved at Higher Level, or a combination of both. For example: "667 at HL" or "Must have Mathematics and Physics at Higher Level" or "665 at HL with at least a 6 in English".
Other	In some cases the university will express entry requirements for other curricula on their website, but if not you can do a UCAS points conversion to get a rough idea (UCAS has a calculator you can use: <a href="https://www.ucas.com/ucas/tariff-calculator">https://www.ucas.com/ucas/tariff-calculator</a> ) and then contact the university admissions team to get more information.

## Beyond Minimum Entry Requirements

Minimum entry requirements can be useful, but when assessing how realistic it is to apply to a particular course at a particular university, you need much more information. Minimum entry requirements doesn't tell you anything about how popular the course is, what grades you will be compared to (i.e. your competition) or how flexible the university will be if you don't achieve the grades you were predicted.

Courses with the same entry requirements can have very different offer rates! To pick an extreme example, Law at Oxford requires 3 A's and has a 9% offer rate; whereas Economics & Geography at Leeds requires 3 A's and has a 94% offer rate. A student with 3 A's does NOT have the same chance of acceptance for each of these courses. Even within the same university, 3 A's mean different things. Law at Oxford and Theology at Oxford require the same grades (3 A's), but theology has an offer rate almost 4 times higher.

### Did You Know?

- Since August 2015, 3619 new undergraduate courses were introduced on UCAS?
- ~20,000 courses changed (e.g.: modules, entry requirements)





# How Courses Are Different

## Single Honours Courses

Broad, single honours courses such as English, Mathematics, Engineering or Physics were the popular choice for many years, and these still remain very popular. Courses can differ markedly in length - from two years for a 'condensed course' to six years for a professional course such as architecture. Single honours means that students typically choose 1 subject from 1 faculty to study when they apply. This varies from the American model of majoring/ minoring in a faculty after 1-2 years of study. However, the UK is beginning to offer more liberal arts programmes (and Scotland is leading the charge on this!), based on the American model of building your own degree.

## Joint Honours Courses

Reflecting something akin to the US 'major and minor' system, the joint honours degree allows a student to study two subjects with them either being 50/50 split in terms of credits, or having a leaning towards one of the two. In the naming of the degree, when the two subjects are joined by 'and', they are very likely to be 50/50 split, whereas if 'with' is used (e.g.: "Economics with French"), it indicates that there will be more weighting on the first subject; in this case Economics.

The two subjects do not have to be related, although most students do pick subjects in the same faculty (e.g.: both are humanities). Usually, joint honours degrees have higher requirements for entry than a single honours degree, requiring the approval of both departments concerned. The two subjects are then taken at the same levels and at the academic standards as those taking either subject as a single honours major.

Examples of joint honours degrees include:

Philosophy & Computer Science  
Forensics & Anthropology  
Drama with Social Care  
History with Biological Science

## Modular Courses

Some universities offer modular degrees. This means that students can build their own course through selecting modules they are interested in. Modular degrees might appeal to students with a wide range of interests and abilities, who don't want to narrow down too soon. Some students may choose to select modules that keep their degree connected to the arts, the sciences and humanities.

Be warned! Modular courses can be tough on the timetable and workload. It may be the case that the work covered in each module is the core component of the single honours course in that particular subject, which may mean it's the most difficult part of the course. You may also find that the modules you want to take aren't available to you because of timetabling constraints or because the university caps numbers on popular modules. It is worth researching into how much freedom you will have in selecting modules and if guidance on the selection of modules is available. It is also worth considering whether or not postgraduate study will be possible on completion of the modular degree and how potential employers will view it.

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# Sandwich Courses: a vocational choice

## Sandwich Courses: a vocational choice

A sandwich course enables students to have periods of academic study as well as periods of paid work experience as part of their undergraduate degree. Work experience is typically in commerce, industry or the public sector, and can be at home or abroad. The work experience is typically taken in either a 'thin sandwich' of two separate six-month placements or a 'thick sandwich' of one year. Sandwich courses are offered in a wide range of subjects at some universities in the UK, including: Bath, Brunel, Cardiff, Loughborough and Surrey.



### Advantages

- You can apply your academic studies to real-life working situations;
- Experience in the field allows you to test the water before entering the job market;
- You can start to build a network of potential employers and possibly secure a job offer when you graduate;
- Your employment prospects may be enhanced because your work experience helps you to stand out from the competition. You will have demonstrated sought-after skills in a workplace context (technical, communication, teamwork) and you will be more likely to have maturity and confidence in an interview setting;
- Your period of work experience may count towards a professional qualification;
- You may have the chance to work abroad and consolidate/learn a foreign language;
- You will earn while you learn. This may well be even more desirable given current fee levels. It is also possible that the company you work for will decide to sponsor you during your fourth year at university.





# The Scottish System

Scottish universities have some of the highest rates of satisfaction and employment in the UK. There are a range of different types of institution, some of which are world famous, such as University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, and University of St. Andrews.

## The Four Year Experience

The university of Edinburgh says: "Scottish degree programmes are designed to include four years of study to give you a broader and more flexible education. They allow you to try a range of subjects before specialising. Even if you know exactly what you want to do, you can study additional subjects and add depth to your education. By the time you graduate your breadth of knowledge will be highly prized by employers, giving you the best chance of success in your chosen field."

## Advantages of the Scottish System

- It may enhance your career prospects by giving you more breadth of skill and knowledge
- You can gain experience of new subject areas without committing long-term
- You may discover new areas of interest or strength and can then tailor your degree to those
- There are often opportunities to study abroad which may impress future employers.







## What is a 'Foundation Year'?

A foundation is a one-year preparation course designed for international students to ensure they have the English language and academic skills to be able to succeed at British university level. If you are an international student with less than 13 years of education and would like to take your first degree in the UK, a foundation course may be the right option for you.

### Entry Requirements

- Usually IELTS scores of 4.5 or equivalent (with no single element less than 4.0)
- Secondary school transcripts
- Sometimes universities ask for academic qualifications (e.g.: 1 or 2 A Levels)
- Reference letter from your high school
- Personal Statement
- Scanned copy of passport and visa.

## Advantages for International Students

- Foundation degrees are designed for international students to help fill gaps in skills (particularly English language and study skills).
- They help to build confidence alongside academic readiness.
- Education methods are different all over the world. Foundation courses in the UK are designed to level out the differences and get all students up to the same standard. This can be in an academic subject, or in your language skills.
- You can tailor your course to suit the degree you want to study. Often, foundation courses are offered with a goal to support towards particular degrees. This involves studying core modules common to each route, plus a set of subject-specific modules that are chosen to focus on the academic areas most useful to your degree.
- They allow you to get familiar with university-style teaching (with lecture, tutorials, and seminar-style classes), which gives you an advantage over other students who come straight from secondary school.
- If you haven't lived in the UK before, you benefit from a bit of time to adjust and settle into everyday life, not just academic life. You get an opportunity to familiarise with cultural differences, as well as practical things like finding your way around. It puts you in touch with other students who are experiencing just the same thing, giving you a firm foundation when you begin your undergraduate course.
- In many cases, successful completion of your foundation year (achieving the required grades) will guarantee you a place on a degree linked to that foundation course.



# Worksheet: Compare Your Courses

If you already know what you want to study and have a shortlist of universities you like, you may not have considered how different their courses can be (even if they're single honours courses with the same title, like 'English Literature' or 'Engineering!').

	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3
Course name			
Opportunities to study abroad?			
Frequency of seminars/ tutorials?			
Size of seminars/ tutorials?			
Mode of assessment (coursework vs. exams)?			
Frequency of lectures?			
Frequency of practicals?			
Fieldwork assignments?			



# Special Subjects: **Medicine**

Medicine is very competitive, so if you're not certain of gaining top grades (and standing out from the crowd of other people who got top grades!), think about potential back up plans!

For UK applications to Medicine, you are allowed to enter only four medical schools on the UCAS form (in most applications you can enter 5 options), but you are also allowed to enter a non-medical 'insurance' course if you wish to.

## Subject & Grade Requirements

Most medical schools demand Chemistry as an entrance requirement, and the vast majority also require Biology.

Excellent GCSE results are needed: many medical schools automatically reject candidates with fewer than six grades at A or A\* (some require at least eight A\*s at GCSE).

Finally, very high A level/IB predictions are also necessary.

## Out of School Commitment to Medicine

Successful applicants will need to demonstrate their interest in, and commitment to, medicine. In order to achieve this, it's advisable to have at least one period shadowing/ observing a medic at work, and one volunteering for one of the 'caring professions' such as helping in a hospice or a care home.

It is also compulsory for all medical students to have been vaccinated against hepatitis B before being admitted to the course.

## Your Passport Matters

Quotas for international medical students are capped by the UK government. So as well as being highly competitive as a program, there are fewer spots available to you. To bring this to life: of 900 international applicants to Medicine at Oxford from 2015-17, only 14 received offers!

If you're an international medicine applicant, you may want to consider other options outside of the UK (e.g.: European courses taught in English).

## UKCAT

The clinical aptitude test (UKCAT) was introduced by medical schools including Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham and Sheffield, and has to be taken by anyone applying to these schools (amongst others).

This exam lasts for 90-minute and aims to test the candidate's mental abilities and how s/he might respond to patients. Scientific knowledge is not tested.

UKCAT tests:

- Verbal Reasoning (22 minutes)
- Decision Making (32 minutes)
- Quantitative Reasoning (25 minutes)
- Abstract Reasoning (14 minutes)
- Situational Judgment (27 minutes)

Example question (from 'decision making')

All crows are black. All doves are white. This bird is either a dove or a crow.

Place 'Yes' if the conclusion does follow. Place 'No' if the conclusion does not follow.

- ◇ This bird is white.
- ◇ This bird is either white or a crow.
- ◇ If not a crow this bird is a black dove.
- ◇ This bird is either black or a dove.
- ◇ This bird is neither black nor white.

Question from [www.ukcat.ac.uk](http://www.ukcat.ac.uk)





## BMAT

The BMAT stands for the BioMedical Admissions Test and is for applicants to Medicine, Biomedical Science and Dentistry courses at certain universities.

Candidates for Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial or UCL will need to sit the BMAT test. Other courses at other universities may also accept or require the BMAT.

This tests, amongst other things, scientific knowledge. This is the most important difference between the BMAT and the UKCAT.

This exam lasts for 2 hours and is divided into 3 sections:

- Aptitude and skills (60 mins)

This tests problem solving, understanding arguments and the ability to analyse and draw inference from data sets.

- Scientific knowledge and applications (30 mins)

This test the ability to apply scientific knowledge to a real world context.

- Written communication (30 mins)

This tests the ability to develop and organise ideas and to communicate them clearly and effectively with eloquence and concision.

Example Question (from "scientific knowledge")

Insulin is a protein involved in the regulation of human blood glucose levels. Genetic engineering can be used to allow the large-scale production of human insulin.

Which statement describes the process of genetic engineering in this case?

A) Taking insulin from a human and inserting it into the DNA of a bacterium. As the bacterium reproduces, it makes large quantities of insulin DNA that can be used to treat human diabetes.

B) Taking insulin from a human and inserting it into the DNA of a bacterium. As the bacterium reproduces, it makes large quantities of insulin that can be used to treat human diabetes.

C) Taking the insulin gene from a human chromosome and inserting it into the DNA of a bacterium. As the bacterium reproduces, it makes large quantities of insulin DNA that can be used to treat human diabetes.

D) Taking the insulin gene from a human chromosome and inserting it into the DNA of a bacterium. As the bacterium reproduces, it makes large quantities of insulin that can be used to treat human diabetes.

E) Taking the insulin gene from a human chromosome and replacing it in another human chromosome in the same human, so that it will work better to produce large quantities of insulin.

### TACTICS

Most medical schools in the UK require UKCAT, some require BMAT, some do not require a test, some interview, so consider your strengths!

### Test Tips (UKCAT & BMAT)

- Take as many practice exams as you can bear.
- Time yourself and be aware of points for each section.
- for BMAT, practice with pen and paper.
- for BMAT, brush up on your GCSE (or equivalent) science.
- Read the question and then read it again!
- Don't bring in irrelevant or tangential knowledge.
- Bring earplugs to limit the disturbance of sound in the room.



# Special Subjects: Law

Please note that in the UK, you do not need study law as your first degree to become a solicitor or barrister. It is possible to study an alternative but well-respected discipline (e.g.: History) at undergraduate level and then complete a law conversion course. Entry to undergraduate law courses is very competitive, particularly at the more prestigious institutions.

## Subject & Grade Requirements

You will need high predicted A level/IB grades, together with excellent GCSE results. Successful applicants will also need to demonstrate their interest in, and knowledge of, the courses applied for. Appropriate work experience will also be an asset and demonstrating critical thinking skills will be essential.

### TOP TIP

Make sure you regularly read respected newspapers and are familiar with current legal issues.

## LNAT

The National Law Aptitude Test doesn't test your knowledge of law or any other subject. It is designed as an aptitude test to assess whether you will be successful in studying law at university.

It is a two-part test: multiple choice questions based on passages of text, and an essay.

- Section A: computer-based multiple choice exam in which you read passages of text and answer questions that test your comprehension of them.

- Section B: you write one essay from a list of three proposed subjects. This section is not marked automatically, and does not contribute towards your LNAT score, but it allows you to show off your reasoning and argument skills.

### Example LNAT Questions (from Section A and B)

Section A: "There are numerous mentally ill offenders in our prisons. This is shameful. The only point of punishment is deterrence. But to be deterred one needs to be a rational person, and a rational person is a person who understands the likely consequences of his or her actions. Mentally ill offenders are, by definition, less than fully rational. So they cannot be deterred, and should not be in prison."

Which of the following is a flaw in the argument?

- (a) It does not tell us anything about the definition of mental illness that it is using
- (b) It starts from the assumption that we should be ashamed of our prisons
- (c) It suggests that we have to embark on a very troublesome review of the way that imprisonment is used as a punishment
- (d) It does not allow for the possibility that some people who were not mentally ill when they offended might become mentally ill in prison
- (e) It relies on statistics.

Section B: "in a Western society, arranged marriage should not be tolerated. Discuss."



# Special Subjects: **Music**

There are various options available to students who want to study music at degree level. This ranges from focusing on technical/ industry aspects, to an academic study of the subject, all the way to focusing on performing, conducting and composing. The main differences are explained below:

## TECHNICAL

There are an increasing number of courses offered in the technical aspects of music, such as:

- Physics and music performance
- Sound engineering
- Audio recording and production
- Sound and music for games
- Computing and music

To study music at degree level, it is typical for music to be required as an A Level or IB subject, and/or for the student to have achieved a minimum grade in their ABRSM (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music).

For engineering or sound technology focused degrees, maths or physics may be required.

## ACADEMIC

The academic study of music can include music theory, or looking at music in the context of other disciplines, such as sociology, English literature or archaeology.

You don't have to take a joint honours degree to get variety in music study, however. For example, Music at Cambridge is described as "...ranging from medieval plainchant to the blues, and from advanced analysis to the study of music and science. It has a strong academic component, particularly focusing on history, analysis, composition and performance, but also offers a range of other topics.

Courses such as these will typically require you to have studied music and to have advanced achievements in ABRSM.

## MUSIC CONSERVATOIRES

This route might be right for you if you want to be a professional musician, conductor or composer.

Music conservatoires are very competitive, and the application process can feel very high pressure if you're not very experienced with recitals.

### REQUIREMENTS:

You'll need to be a confident and accomplished performer, ideally with at least a distinction in an instrument at Grade 8, if not a diploma.

### APPLICATION PROCESS:

For most conservatoires, you can apply to up to 6 through CUKAS (the Conservatoires UK Admissions Service). You can apply directly to some institutions (notably the Guildhall School of Music and Drama).

### AUDITION PROCESS:

The audition process varies between conservatoires. Performers will usually be invited to give a live audition at the conservatoire. In some cases they may be allowed to send a recording or video.

## Organ or Choral Scholarship Applications

Cambridge and Oxford are the most famous examples, but there are many others.

For choral scholarships, you do not need to have studied music, but you will need good sight-reading, aural skills and Singing Grade 8. It's advisable to join a chamber choir to gain experience before applying.

For organ scholarships, ABRSM Grade 8 is required, as well as good sight reading and transposition skills. Ideally, applicants have been involved in playing for a chapel/ Sunday services. This helps develop confidence performing and accompanying choral singing.

## UNUSUAL OPTIONS

- Music and Egyptology
- Music and Criminology
  - Politics and Music
  - Music Journalism
- Music Instrument Craft
- Geography and Music
- Music Management

## Check-list for Researching Conservatoires:

- Reputation - what is their area of strength as an institution?
- Links - are they connected to any orchestra apprentice schemes?
- Graduate success - research what other graduates have gone on to do.
- Freelance opportunities - can you work while you study?
- Building networks - what other music institutions are there nearby? Are their orchestras/ choirs you can join?
- Type of degree - how much flexibility? Are their exchange programmes?





# Special Subjects: Drama



Many universities offer academic drama degrees or courses, which can be applied to through the usual UCAS application process. Degree courses offered by different universities and even within a particular department can range from being highly practical to being heavily theoretical in focus. Often it is a 'joint honours' component with a complementary subjects such as English, Psychology or Business. You're probably a good fit for a drama degree at a university if you enjoy drama but don't necessarily want to go into a career in the performing arts. A drama course at a traditional university will focus on theoretical and academic disciplines as well as practical work. You're probably a better fit for a course at a Drama School if you want to be prepared vocationally for a career in performing arts or technical theatre. The training offered by drama schools is comprehensive and professional and has an emphasis on the practical work and working in the industry.

## Drama School Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Will I apply through UCAS?** Generally speaking, no. You'll apply to each drama school separately and directly. However, some schools are applied to through UCAS (e.g.: Guildford School of Acting, LIPA, East 15 Drama School etc). It can be even more complicated: for Birmingham school of Acting and Mountview, some courses are applied for through UCAS and others via independent application form. There are other exceptions, such as ones that are also Music Conservatoires (e.g.: the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama), in which case you will apply through CUKAS.
2. **Which Drama Schools are respected?** Look at graduate outcomes and what ex-drama students say about their experience, but as a starting point you can use Drama UK as a guide for accredited and recommended drama schools.
3. **Can I take on acting projects while I'm at drama school?** Generally speaking, no. Students are typically not allowed to take acting work for the duration of their degree course. Students will be trained by staff with professional experience and have the opportunity to work in professional theatres and studios, but they will be required to work long hours and immerse themselves in their work.
4. **What will I end up with at the end of a drama school course?** Most drama school courses will lead to an academic qualification (in most cases a BA Hons degree). However, the emphasis will be a practical training for future work (unlike a university Drama course).
5. **How do I choose between Drama Schools?** They may seem similar at first glance, but they will offer different courses and focuses, for example more television acting, more classical theatre, more voice work etc. Do your research, read student blogs or read about alumni.

## Auditions and Interviews: What to Expect

The audition panel will not necessarily be looking for a polished performance. They will be looking for an understanding of text and character: the ability to connect with the text with intelligence and feeling. You may be asked to perform your speech again in a different way to see how well you respond to direction. Some schools may have several rounds of auditions so applicants may be called back. This can be a long and gruelling process which also tests a candidate's determination, commitment and flexibility.

Typically you will be expected to perform one or two short speeches of about 2-3 minutes in length from memory. These pieces should be contrasting in mood/ tone. You may also be asked to present contrasting classical and modern pieces. Some institutions set pieces for audition or have a list of banned pieces so check individual requirements. You should try to pick pieces that suit your age and type that you could potentially be cast as. You may be asked to take part in improvisation, movement and voice sessions.

**MUSICAL THEATRE:** Those applying for musical theatre courses will also be expected to sing and may also be asked to participate in a dance/ movement workshop.

**TECHNICAL THEATRE:** If you are applying for a technical theatre course, you will likely be interviewed and asked to bring a portfolio of relevant work. This may include sketches, models, photographs, prompt books, costume designs, light, sound and set designs. Interviews may last all day and could include group exercises and discussions. You may be asked to prepare for an exercise in advance.

# Special Subjects: **Art**

Art foundation courses have processes which differ from UCAS and there may be earlier deadlines. Make sure you know the requirements and deadlines to avoid disappointment!

## Art Foundation Overview

An art foundation course comprises one year of intensive study at a local art school. This is needed prior to a degree because your pre-university study will usually be focused on Fine Art (painting and drawing), which does not prepare you for the industrial aspects of fashion, graphics and advertising. To study Fine Art at university, applicants may not have to do a foundation course, but if you are unsure about the area you want to specialise in, then the foundation course is necessary.

Universities and higher education institutions offering art foundation courses typically follow this structure:

- In the first term you take a range of workshops in various art disciplines;
- In the second term, you're likely to specialise in the area you will choose for your degree application
- In the third term, you'll do a project in your specialist area, which may be exhibited at the end of the foundation.

## Interviews & Portfolios

The UAL (University of the Arts London) gives the following definition of a portfolio: "A portfolio is a collection of your work, which shows how your skills and ideas have developed over a period of time. It demonstrates your creativity, personality, abilities and commitment, and helps us to evaluate your potential."

Universities assessing your application will take very different approaches, including (but not limited to!):

- E-portfolio (photos of your work), followed by interview with real portfolio
- Interview with one or two members of the department
- Interview presentation to staff and other applicants
- Just reviewing your portfolio

## Top Tips for your Arts Portfolio

1. Research carefully, and record the art portfolio requirements for the courses that interest you.
2. Plan your art portfolio to demonstrate your originality, your skill and creativity.
3. Exhibit a range of modes, mediums and techniques in your portfolio - don't be a one-trick pony!





# Different Types of University

University education started many centuries ago in the UK. The universities available today may have been founded 800 years ago or just 80 years ago. The 'personalities' of different institutions are diverse and will suit some people much more than others.



## Ancient Universities (including Collegiate universities)

These refer to older institutions such as Oxford, Cambridge, St. Andrew's, Durham, amongst others. They usually have more long-standing traditions and many have strong academic reputations across all departments. They are typically situated in smaller, more historic locations (although Cambridge and Oxford are cities, they are small in comparison to Manchester, for example). Oxford, Cambridge and Durham are 'collegiate', meaning you live and socialise in a college within the university.



## Red Brick Universities

These refer to established institutions, often the central focus of a large city, such as Birmingham, Bristol, Southampton, Manchester, Cardiff and Leeds. Many of these universities are in the Russell Group (often seen as a badge of quality across all departments). They are often situated in larger cities, which will have an impact on the type of student experience you have. Cities are good for connectivity, social life and access to different experiences.



## Plate glass or 'Campus' Universities

These refer to newer universities, some of whom have excellent academic reputations. Examples include: York, Warwick, Sussex. The settings of these universities are typically more 'campus-style', set away from the city in greener, more remote areas. This will have a big impact on student experience: it can be positive to have a sanctuary away from the city, but also can be oppressive for people who prefer being in a buzzing city environment.



## New Universities

These are typically universities that were previously polytechnics or further education colleges. These universities are often near to, and therefore an alternative to, a larger or more famous university (e.g.: Sheffield Hallam university is in Sheffield). This doesn't mean the universities are low quality, however some of them have specialised in certain subjects or departments much more than others.



# Your Open Day / Research Guide

## Before You Visit / Kicking Off Your Research

### FIND OUT WHAT STUDENTS THINK

- Check the 'alternative prospectus' written by students themselves - this may be revealing! You can often access this via the university website.
- Visit the 'Virgin Alternative Guide to Higher Education' which has contributions from current undergraduates.
- Visit the 'Push Guide to Which University' which is written by students for students.
- Look at the student reviews on [www.whatuni.com](http://www.whatuni.com)



### ASK YOURSELF:

- What am I looking for in my course?
- What am I looking for in my university?
- Do I want to be close/ more accessible to home? Think about ease and cost of getting to airports, trains etc.
- Do I want to be in a campus or a city environment?
- How important is a vibrant nightlife/ theatre or orchestral opportunities/ major sporting venues?
- What will the cost of living be? A survey by the Royal Bank of Scotland indicated that Birmingham, Leicester, Sheffield and York are amongst the cheapest university cities in which to live; London is by far the most expensive.
- How safe is the environment? It's worth looking into the crime levels in the area compared to the UK in general.
- How do I want to learn (e.g.: more practicals/ smaller lecture sizes)?

### PRIORITISE!

Pick the most important aspects for you and rank your courses/ universities by the ones that hit the most points (e.g.: campus living + near an international airport + exam assessed course)

### Example Questions to Ask in Open Days

- How would you describe the 'personality' of this university? How do you think it is different from other universities?
- What is the staff/student ratio?
- What proportion of students live onsite? How do student residences work? What's the typical cost?
- How easy is it to travel to and from the campus (what public transport links are there?)
- Does it feel safe at night? Is there 24/ hour security?
- What is the social life like?
- What student support is there? (e.g.: Health, Welfare, Tutorial support)
- What is the typical cost of living in this city/ area?



# Oxford & Cambridge (“Oxbridge”)

## Don't Believe Everything You See in the Movies

With several hundreds of years of history, appearances in novels and films, Oxford and Cambridge hold a special place in the imaginations of people across the globe. Be careful of media portrayals as these can lead to false stereotypes. Both Oxford and Cambridge:

- Seek to attract the best and brightest applicants regardless of background
- Have highly rigorous application procedures designed to allow the best candidates to shine;
- Are diverse and vibrant places to live and study.

They are different to many other UK universities in a number of ways. We'll explore two of those below:

## The College System

The college is at the centre of the student's university life, for both accommodation and social events. The college also monitors academic progress. Colleges offer a small and caring community in which to live, although each college has their own 'personality' and differ in many respects:

**Size:** Trinity Cambridge has almost 700 students, while Mansfield Oxford has just over 200 students.

**Male/Female ratio:** ranges from just over 50% female to over 70% male.

**Formality:** (gowns, formal hall dinners): ranges from no gowns to regular gowned formal dinners

**Location:** ranges from city centre to 1 hour walk away.

**Modern vs. Traditional:** colleges have different reputations, some very traditional (St. John's Cambridge, Christ Church Oxford), while others are more modern and alternative (St. Catherine's Oxford, Robinson Cambridge).

**Accommodation & Finances:** different living in college options and bursaries available. For example, Trinity Cambridge give an average of over £4,000 in bursaries to each student.

**Facilities:** sports fields, gyms, bars and music rooms are differently available depending on the college.

## Teaching

You will attend lectures, classes (and laboratory work if your course requires it). Unlike at many other universities, at Oxford and Cambridge you'll also benefit from highly personalised teaching time with experts in your field.

You are required to prepare an essay or other piece of work in advance of these sessions and then you'll meet with your tutor to discuss the work, perhaps with one or two other students. Tutors are often world experts in their field so this time is extremely valuable when developing your understanding of the subject.

## Oxbridge Interview Myths

- 1: The interviewer will try to catch you out.
- 2: You need to have studied the subject applied for.
- 3: They are looking for you to know the right answers.

“We will disagree with whatever you say, be prepared to debate and don't worry that we think you're wrong.”

Peter Millican, Oxford University



# Understanding League Tables

Some Universities have excellent reputations across the board, no matter whether you are doing Arts, Sciences or Humanities, you'll receive excellent quality education. However, most universities have excelled in one or two departments and gained a reputation for them. This by no means indicates that a university that has a reputation for one subject means they will be sub-standard in other subjects. However, it does mean that getting into the 'reputation' course may be much harder because it's more competitive.

## What do League Tables Consider?

University league tables, although they do need to be treated with some caution, do offer some very useful information to help you make an informed choice. There are various different league tables available and they use a range of different indicators. The main indicators taken into account are:

- Average grades of first year students
- Application vs. places: the total number of applications against the total number accepted
- Student/staff ratio: on average the number of staff in relation to the number of students;
- Teaching: the marks received in teaching assessments by individual departments;
- Research: the research rating received by each department;
- Degree classifications: 1sts and 2.1s as a percentage of all classified degrees;
- Employment: the percentage of graduates entering full-time employment
- Drop out rate: the percentage of students failing to complete courses;
- Library, computer and student resource spending;
- Student satisfaction.

## Independent Resources

The Complete University Guide gives a breakdown of how universities fare on each criteria and allows you to filter by university. <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/>

### Which League Table Should I Use?

The three major international league tables each take a slightly different approach:

**QS** - puts the most emphasis on the international reputation of the university.

**Times** - puts most emphasis on teaching.

**Shanghai Ranking** - puts a lot of emphasis on research (which is likely to have more impact on your post-graduate experience than undergraduate).





## Completing Your Profile

You can do this at any time, not just when you're about to submit applications. The profile is split into 5 sections:

1. Personal information (e.g.: your school, your support needs)
2. Qualifications (this can include qualifications you're expecting to have)
3. Work History (if you work part time, or have work placement experiences)
4. Personal Statement (this is an important part of standing out from other candidates who have the same grades).
5. Contact details (ensuring you're kept in the loop on how your application is processed).

## Making Your Application

- Save the courses you're planning to apply for as 'favourites'.
- Click on 'Start a new application'.
- Select the provider you want to apply to and the courses you want to study from the list you saved as favourites.
- Change the order of your chosen courses by moving them up and down the list to indicate 'first choice', 'second choice' etc.
- Ensure you have completed all the sections of your profile (and in particular that you're happy with your personal statement!). Mark it as 'complete'.
- Click on 'Submit your application'. Good luck!

## Tracking Your Application

You can log into UCAS Progress and select the 'Applications Tab'. When your application is received, it will be marked as 'Acknowledged'. You will see offers on this page as well.

## Managing Your Offers

UCAS Progress will show you your offer status. This can be unsuccessful, conditional or unconditional offers. With conditional offers, you will see the conditions. Universities may return your application for you to make changes, to add alternative courses before deciding whether to make you an offer.

You have the option to accept or decline offers. When you have chosen which one to go for, click 'accept'.

BridgeU

LONDON

18-26 Suncourt House  
Essex Road  
London N1 8LN

HONG KONG

4/F Cheung Hing Industrial Building  
12P Smithfield  
Kennedy Town  
Hong Kong

[E. hi@bridgeu.com](mailto:E_hi@bridgeu.com)