

THE BRITISH CURRICULUM

You are in a British system of education, and this means you should be leaving school either with IGCSE's (International General Certificate of Education) or AS (Advanced Supplementary) and/or Advanced level (A2). This generally means that you should have completed either 11 years of education (16+ years of age) or 13 years (18+ years of age).

How do you get into university with these qualifications?

From Year 9 you should start thinking about your future after school (*well you should be!*). You will be going onto a three, four or five year journey into the unknown after leaving school. How do you choose your university or degree/major - (the course that you will be studying at university)? What is best suited to your abilities and careers plans? Where is the best place to go for your course? It is not an easy decision - there are thousands of universities, degree and course options now available worldwide.

Everyone will be offering advice and their personal opinions of what is best for you! Who should you listen to? Where should you start?

Many of you may think you know what you will do, but maybe later change your minds.

And of course there are those of you who have no idea yet where to go or what your future careers is going to be.

There is no perfect system for choosing your course because the best course for you isn't necessarily the best for someone else. The same applies to where you intend to study.

Each university has its own character - some are large, some are small, some are located in a city and some on their own campuses with all facilities.

With the internet now being a part of our everyday lives you will be spending a lot of time browsing websites and filling in application forms online. Of course your first step in the application process is deciding on the course/major that you will be studying at university. The next step will be finding a suitable university - a big task!

Deciding what to do and where to go is a big event.

Getting into a university is a long process

**Start
Early!**

UNIVERSITIES IN THE UK

After five years of secondary education, students take examinations in a range of subjects at the level of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and/or the International General Certificate of Education (IGCSE). The GCSE is a single-subject examination set and marked by independent examination boards.

Students usually take from 8 to 12 subjects including mathematics and English language (there is no upper or lower limit although you will find most educational institutions prefer a minimum of 6 subjects). The basic requirements are not an indication of what the best universities may require

After taking GCSEs, students may leave secondary school or choose to continue their education at vocational or technical colleges, or take a higher level of secondary school examinations known as AS (Advanced Supplementary) levels and then Advanced Level examinations (A2), which are required for university entrance in the UK.

Having completed GCSEs, students have a choice of whether to continue with further education at school or college or to undertake employment.

Vocational courses prepare you for careers that are based on manual or practical activities, usually non-academic and directly related to a specific trade or occupation. This is sometimes called technical education, as it directly develops expertise in a particular group of techniques or technology. Generally, vocation and career are used interchangeably.

Students who decide to go on to university basically require a minimum of 3 advanced levels with a good range of GCSE/IGCSE subjects and should be 18 years old. Some universities and some specific courses do not accept students under a certain age.

Courses at universities can be from one year to 4/5 years long. **Foundation and access** courses are offered by some universities.

Foundations are one year courses which help prepare you for an undergraduate course if you do not have the necessary entry requirements. You can find more information on www.educationuk.org.

At university you will be studying to obtain an 'undergraduate' degree or bachelor's degree. This normally takes 3 to 4 years or 5 years for medical qualifications.

There are also '**Foundation Degrees**' (not the same as the one year foundation or access course). The foundation degree is two years which is equivalent to the first two years of a bachelor's degree. For further information and entry requirements check www.fdf.ac.uk.

Of course there are various types of **undergraduate degrees**. There is the standard degree and depending on your grades it could be either a first class or honours degree or a pass or ordinary degree. Many universities offer combined and joint honours degrees. You can study two or more subjects that do not have to have equal weighting and may not necessarily be related.

Then there is the **Sandwich course**. These are degree programmes made up of a combination of periods of study plus time spent in industry, commerce or administration (i.e. working). So this makes the degree course four years instead of the usual three. You work for about a year in your third year and return to university in the fourth year.

These are often popular courses not only with students but employers as well because a student can gain that valuable '*work experience*' so that when they graduate they not only have academic qualification but relevant work experience. Not having work experience can sometimes be an obstacle when searching for a job after completing university!

It is also quite common for UK universities to offer students the chance to study abroad for a period from a term to a full academic year. This is most common in language degrees but other subjects such as engineering, nursing, business studies, art and law may also offer a year of study abroad. www.ukcosa.org.uk

Another academic higher education option is a **Diploma of Higher Education** (Dip HE). This is a two year university level course and is available in many humanities and social science subjects such as education, social work and health care.

Successful completion of a Dip HE may allow students to transfer directly on to the third year of a degree course.

Scholarships: many universities are now offering scholarships to international students. Check with the university you are applying to see if they do offer scholarships.

You can search for further information online www.britishcouncil.org or www.educationuk.org/scholarships.

Entry requirements are basically 3 advanced level subjects. But there is also a points system or Tariff which awards points to the different levels of entry qualifications.

When checking the entry requirements remember to check if any particular subject(s) is required and at what level.

There is only one application form for universities in the UK. You apply through an organization called **UCAS** (Universities and Colleges Admissions Services) and have a choice of up to 5 universities/courses. You can only apply to four universities for medicine, dentistry and veterinary course. The fifth course will have to be other than the above.

Also if you are applying for medicine, dentistry or a veterinary science course, or to Cambridge or Oxford university, your application form has to be sent much earlier.

If you wish to study medicine or dentistry as well as the *minimum* 3 good Advanced level subjects you will also need to take the

BMAT

(*Biomedical Admissions Test*)

or

UKCAT

(*Clinical Aptitude Test*)

www.bmat.org.uk

www.ukcat.ac.uk

Other subsidiary examinations are being introduced for other subjects too, especially for Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial University.

Remember also that for some universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, (you can only apply to one by the way), you may be asked for an interview.

Art courses and many architectural courses will want a portfolio of your work.

Find out more on all university courses on
www.ucas.com.

There is only one application form for UK universities

www.ucas.com