Undergraduate: someone doing their first degree (usually what’s called a “bachelors” degree). Most students at universities are undergraduates.

Postgraduate: someone doing an additional degree after their bachelors degree (usually called “masters” degrees or “PhDs”).

Prospectus: a book or online document containing general information about a university, as well as specific course information.

Fresher: a first year student.

Halls: university owned accommodation where most students live in their first year. Usually each student has their own bedroom and there is a shared kitchen.

Catered: halls where meals are included as part of the rent. They are usually served in a canteen close to where the student bedrooms are.

En-suite: a bedroom with its own bathroom attached. If your room is not en-suite you will share a bathroom with other students.

Contact time: time spent with members of university staff. The main examples are lectures, seminars and labs.

Lecturers: someone who gives lectures. They can have lots of different titles such as doctor or professor depending on their position within the university.

Lectures: a lecturer stands at the front of the room and talks in detail about a subject they’re an expert on (usually with the aid of a PowerPoint). Students take notes. Most academics allow questions at the end but lectures aren’t usually very interactive.

Seminars: a group of around 15 students meet to discuss a subject in depth, led by university staff. The discussion could be about something that has been raised in lectures, or in their own private reading. Students are assigned work to do in preparation for seminars.

Labs: sessions where students studying a science based subject gain practical experience of the techniques described in lectures. Usually they have to write a report about what happened afterwards.

Reading week: a week in the middle of term where there is no scheduled teaching (lectures or seminars). You are expected to fill your time with independent study. Not all students get a reading week, it depends on your course.

Dissertation: an extended essay of about 10,000 words that students complete in their final year. It can be on any area of their degree subject and often involves doing original research. Students are assigned supervisors to help them.

Semester: this is a word that some universities use instead of saying “term”. A term and a semester are more or less the same thing.

Graduation: a ceremony that happens at the end of a degree. Students wear graduation robes and hats and are presented with their degree certificate.

Campus: a place where all the university buildings are located. This can include accommodation, teaching buildings, libraries, labs and sports facilities. There are also city campus universities that have buildings across one part of a town or city.
Research how competitive certain courses are, at which different institutions you can study a subject and what departments are seeking by looking at their prospectus, websites and UCAS entry profiles. www.ucas.com and http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/ are useful websites. You might also want to investigate what different joint honours degree are available.

If you have a particular career in mind, ensure that you research which degrees can take you on that pathway.

Some courses state specific course entry requirements, for example essential subjects or grades at GCSE or A-level (or equivalent), or required work experience. These should be taken seriously; applicants who do not reach these benchmarks will be unlikely to receive an offer.

Make sure you research the course content. Courses with the same name, but at different universities can contain very different content.

Consider if the course offers a Sandwich Year, Industrial Placement or Study Abroad. Check if these are integral or an optional part of the course.

If you feel a particular course or institution may be too competitive or be asking for grades above what you are likely to achieve it can be worth looking into alternative courses or institutions.

Choose courses that you want to study, that really interest you and that are realistically achievable given your predicted grades and AS Level or equivalent results.
**Applying through UCAS**

**UCAS stands for the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.** It is the system by which you apply to study at university. You create and complete your application online. Students can apply for up to five courses. Students cannot apply to both Oxford and Cambridge, except in specific circumstances. You can’t use more than 4 of your choices to apply for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science courses. Use your 5th option to apply to a different course.

UCAS applications are filled in and submitted electronically online. All the universities you apply to receive the same application, and they can only see the course you have applied to at that university. The application has six sections:

1. **Personal details:** contact details, finance, residential status, disability status
2. **Additional information:** ethnic origin, attended summer schools / taster events, care, parental HE experience
3. **Courses:** what university/college and which course
4. **Education:** all your previous places of study and your qualifications
5. **Employment:** any and all part/full time work you have done
6. **Personal Statement**

Completed applications, including a reference, should be sent to UCAS by the following dates.

- **15 October** for dentistry, medicine, veterinary science and veterinary medicine and for all courses at the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge.
- **15 January** for all other courses except those above and art and design courses with a 24 March deadline, to be guaranteed equal academic consideration.
- **24 March** for art and design courses except those listed with a 15 January deadline, to be guaranteed equal academic consideration.
- **30 June** the final deadline. All applications that UCAS receive by this date are processed and sent to the universities and colleges. Applications that UCAS receive after 30 June will not be sent to the universities and colleges in the normal way. Instead, these applications will go directly into Clearing.
Your personal statement is an important part of your UCAS application. The whole UCAS form is about promoting yourself to achieve an offer for the course(s) of your choice.

The personal statement is the one section where you can really differentiate yourself from other applicants. It is an opportunity to show Admissions Tutors that you have the aptitude, ability and potential to succeed on their degree course. You only write one personal statement, even if you are applying to two different courses.

There is no spell check on UCAS Apply – prepare your personal statement in Word (or equivalent) and then copy and paste.

In UCAS Apply you cannot use formatting effects (bold, italic, underlined).

Your personal statement should be all your own work. You are welcome to take advice from other (carefully chosen) people, however copying someone else’s statement is not allowed. UCAS has sophisticated plagiarism detection software that will alert the universities you applied to if there is a suspicion that you have submitted someone else’s work as your own.
WHAT TO WRITE?

• The same personal statement will be read by all 5 of your university choices. Therefore you should apply for 5 broadly similar courses as it will be difficult to write a coherent personal statement for 5 different courses.

• The statement should feature a strong opening paragraph and display throughout your enthusiasm for your choice of course and your motivation for studying at university.

• You should identify why you want to pursue your particular degree programme.

• You also need to show, with specific evidence, that you understand the subject area you are applying for including wider reading and knowledge outside your school work.

• You should relate your understanding to the subjects you are studying at A-level or equivalent and pick out key attractive aspects of your chosen courses.

• Throughout you should demonstrate enthusiasm, motivation and focus, all supported by evidence.

STYLE AND LAYOUT

• As a guide you should spend the majority of your statement discussing your academic ability and interests. The rest may include information about your life outside of your studies, including relevant skills developed in sports, clubs or volunteering for example. These can help to demonstrate a general enthusiasm especially when directly relevant to the course being applied for.

• Everyone has different experiences and opportunities Universities are not necessarily impressed by the level of your extra-curricular achievements, so much as in your ability to recognise and highlight the useful, relevant, transferrable skills in the things that you have done.

• Applications for vocational courses including Social Work, Medicine and Nursing should discuss relevant work experience. This highlights your commitment to becoming a social worker, doctor or nurse respectively. It is important to show you understand the role and responsibilities of joining these professions.
Admissions Tutors read hundreds of personal statements. It is therefore important to convey your desire to study a particular subject throughout your application. It’s a good idea to think about the way that you actually phrase things to be most effective. Ensure that you write your personal statement in standard English, not text language. The same facts about your academic interests or extracurricular activities can be put over in either an information orientated or accomplishment orientated way. The former describes what you did, the latter focuses on tangible, specific personal achievements. Some examples help to illustrate why the latter is viewed favourably by admissions tutors.

- **Information orientated** – ‘I played cricket, rugby, tennis, football and most other sports’

- **Accomplishment orientated** – ‘I captained the school cricket team organising a series of inter-school matches. I designed advertising posters for these matches and introduced a ticketing system which raised £300 to buy new bats’

Similar examples from an applicant’s academic life could be prepared, for example focusing on what you gained from school trips, guest speakers or additional reading. Try to avoid just listing what you have done outside your syllabus. You need to write about what you gained from these experiences and how this relates to studying at university.

- **Use action words** – these convey a sense of participation, involvement and accomplishment

  E.g. Trained, invented, wrote, designed, created, analysed, presented, discussed.

It is a good idea to ask someone to look over your personal statement to check for spelling, grammar etc. You can ask teachers/tutors for advice, as well as family and friends.
Finance support is available to everyone, and the cost therefore should not be a barrier to anyone who wishes to go to university.

It is important to check for regular updates on the financial support available to ensure that you know what you are entitled to. Up to date finance information can be found on the following websites:

www.gov.uk/student-finance

www.thestudentroom.co.uk
• go to the Student Finance England section

www.youtube.com/sfefilm
• Student Finance England’s own Youtube channel

There may also be additional financial support available directly from the university you plan to apply to. For up to date information about financial support at our Excellence Hub universities please visit:

www.leeds.ac.uk/info/30503/financial_support
www.sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduatefinance
www.york.ac.uk/studentmoney
The University of Leeds was established in 1904 and is one of the largest higher education institutions in the UK. It is a member of the Russell Group; a collection of universities which are committed to maintaining the very best research and an outstanding teaching and learning experience. Courses are taught by staff that are engaged in world-class research and who are often the leaders in their field. Our teaching programmes are underpinned by this and students at all levels have the opportunity to learn about the research process and experience how knowledge is created.

The University of Leeds offers an impressive range of courses with over 560 at undergraduate level. As well as single honours programmes, students have the option to choose from a varied selection of joint honours courses as well as opportunities to study abroad or take an industrial placement year.

The University has over 30,000 students from 145 countries which helps create a vibrant and diverse campus. Leeds also has an award winning students’ union which offers help and advice to students at the University as well as over 350 clubs and societies for them to get involved in. Leeds University Union is the first students’ union in the UK to have won the gold standard twice and continues to be one of the most active students’ unions in the country.

The University is a single campus located a 10 minute walk from the city centre and is a mix of old and new buildings, reflecting its 110 year history. By 2015/16 the University will have spent over £100m on new buildings and facilities to ensure Leeds continues to be a world class institution. The libraries at Leeds house over 2.7 million printed items as well as half a million e-books and our library is one of the major academic research libraries in the UK.

Leeds as a city is renowned for its shopping, arts, sport, leisure, entertainment and nightlife. It is surrounded by beautiful, accessible countryside, with cultural and historical places of interest nearby.
The University of Sheffield experience gives you the best of all worlds. World-class teaching that’s driven by the latest thinking. Practical experience to prepare you for the challenges ahead. A supportive learning community that puts you first. And a down to earth university that’s at the heart of one of the most popular cities in the UK.

This is the place for you to explore your talents and feel part of a buzzing, supportive community. And don’t just take our word for it – the latest polls count us among the best. We were voted No. 1 in the Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey for 2014-15 and our Students’ Union is consistently rated as the best in the country (THE 2010-2014 & National Student Survey 2012-2014).

Our academic staff are leading the way in their field. You’ll get to see those ideas in action and make discoveries of your own. Throughout, your personal tutor will be on hand to offer support and inspiration. Work with top employers as part of your degree. Use your talents and skills for voluntary work. Give our Taste of Work scheme a go. We’ll help you make the most of university life and prepare for the future – so you stand out in a competitive jobs market.

You’ll have the latest and best facilities to explore your ideas on your own terms. Our Information Commons sets a new standard for libraries. It’s open 24 hours a day and has 1,300 study spaces. Need to get online? You’ll find study areas and computer rooms across campus, with extensive wi-fi coverage. You’ll find a packed programme of events and clubs, along with shops, cafes and space to catch up with friends or just take time out. Above all, you’ll find a community of people to help you make the most of your time here.

sheffield.ac.uk
The University of York, has developed considerably since it was established in 1963. There are nearly 16,000 students with almost 12,000 of them following undergraduate degree programmes in the arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences.

Life for all students is centred at Heslington, on the edge of the city, where nine colleges are set in an attractive landscaped campus. It is compact, easy to get around and has a wealth of facilities. All students are members of a college which provides a setting where it is easy to make friends and many of our students are actively involved in their college’s activities, whether sporting, political or social. The Students’ Union runs a diverse range of around 200 clubs and societies.

Sports clubs and societies offer activities at all levels. Student media, drama and music interests are particularly well catered for. There is a network of student support services to give help and advice on many topics. The University combines the advantages of a university that is large enough to provide a lively and cultural environment, with the welcoming, supportive and friendly atmosphere found in a smaller community.

York has earned an international reputation for teaching and research and has become one of the UK’s most popular and successful universities. There is a flexible approach to teaching methods, which are tailored to the particular demands of individual subjects. Many programmes include an element of tutorial teaching as well as seminars and lectures. Projects where students work either singly or in a small group are a feature of many of our programmes. Some modules are also supported by our Yorkshare Virtual Learning Environment.

York is one of Britain’s best connected cities, situated half way between London and Edinburgh. It is a friendly place and our students settle in quickly but the city also feels fresh and exciting once you get to know it well. York has something for everyone whatever your interests. We look forward to welcoming you to our campus where you’ll be able to find out first-hand about our courses, as well as academic, social and college life.

york.ac.uk