

APPLY™

2010 £6.00

SAMPLE

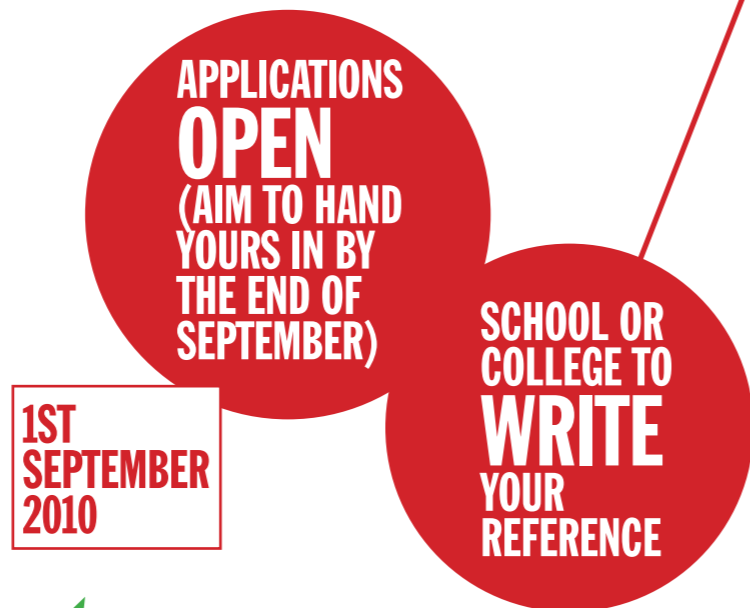


THE
UNIVERSITY
AND CAREER
GUIDE FOR
SIXTH FORMERS

PURE
POTENTIAL

THE UCAS APPLICATION

Worried about the application process? Confused by UCAS applications and how it works? Let *Kuljit Johal*, recent graduate from the *London School of Economics*, break it down for you.



1ST SEPTEMBER 2010

APPLICATIONS OPEN
(AIM TO HAND YOURS IN BY THE END OF SEPTEMBER)

SCHOOL OR COLLEGE TO WRITE YOUR REFERENCE

If you decide that university is right for you, you will have to fill out a UCAS application. All applications are handled through a centralised agency, the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). UCAS is the matchmaker for applicants and institutions. This means that whichever university and course you're applying to and for, you apply through UCAS and not directly to the university concerned.

The UCAS application is what UCAS takes from you and gives to the institutions you choose. For the majority, you can make applications through UCAS to up to five courses. There are some exceptions, for example you can only apply to four if you want to study a Medical, Veterinary or Dentistry course. If you decide you want to go to Oxford or Cambridge, you have to choose between the two, though you can still put down other universities. Some universities also require you to sit special admission tests such as the BMAT and LNAT- for Medicine and Law respectively. (See pages 36 - 38 for further information).

The only way to apply is online (you can no longer make a paper application). Once you register, they will give you your own username and password. The site will also give you guidance on what to include and how to find any details you're missing. Here's a breakdown of the form to give you an idea of what to expect.

Personal details – includes name, address, date of birth, nationality, residential status (EU citizen) and special needs

Additional Information – Here, you will be asked to state your ethnic origin and the occupation of your parents - this information is used by UCAS for research on the demographic make-up of university applicants and not for selection purposes. You will also have the opportunity to fill in any activities you have participated in preparation for Higher Education. PP:Sixth would be ideal for this, as would summer schools, campus visits, summer academies, taster courses and booster courses. This does not include open days and if you haven't done anything, then leave it blank.

Five Choices (Institutions and Courses) – This section of the form requires you to list each of the five universities and courses applied for. Each institution and course has a code, which can be found on the UCAS website. You will have to state if you will be living at home or in student accommodation.

Education – Fill in your exam results so far and details of the exams you plan to take.

Employment – You will be asked to give details of any employment to date.

Personal Statement – This is the section of the form which gives you the chance to sell yourself. We'll look at this aspect of the form in detail on the next page.

Reference – After completing all of the above, you have to send the whole document online to your referee (a teacher) so he or she can confirm the accuracy of the details you've given. The referee is there to comment on your academic achievement and potential, suitability and motivation. They also help the tutors assess your personal qualities, career aspirations and exam predictions.

Deferred Entry – If you are deferring your entry to university, please note that the same deadlines apply for submitting your UCAS application. You will still need to make your choices, but remember to check with the university whether you are able to defer your entry. Most universities have no objections but just discuss briefly in your personal statement why you are taking a year out.



15TH OCTOBER 2010

ADMISSIONS DEADLINE FOR OXBRIDGE, MEDICINE, DENTISTRY & VETERINARY

OCTOBER 2010 – NOVEMBER 2010

ADMISSION TESTS

INTERVIEWS

RECEIVE OFFERS: CONDITIONAL, UNCONDITIONAL OR UNSUCCESSFUL

OCTOBER 2010 – MARCH 2011

15TH JANUARY 2011

SUBMISSION DATE FOR ALL ROUTE A APPLICANTS

MARCH 2011

APPLY FOR STUDENT FINANCE

MAY - JUNE 2011

EXAMINATION

EXAM RESULTS

CLEARING

18TH AUGUST 2011

SEPTEMBER 2011

UNIVERSITY OR GAP YEAR BEGINS

CHOOSE YOUR COURSE AND FIVE UNIVERSITIES

WRITE THE FIRST DRAFT OF PERSONAL STATEMENT

SUMMER 2010

REGISTER WITH UCAS AND BEGIN YOUR ONLINE APPLICATION

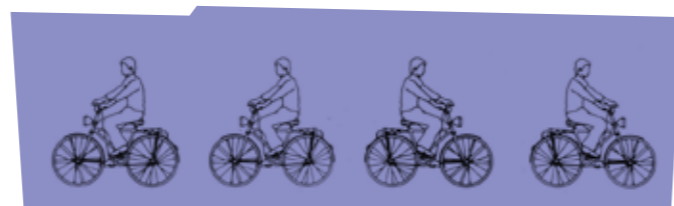
INTERVIEW SKILLS

Will you have an interview? The most important piece of advice here is to do your research. Some universities interview, others don't while within individual universities, some faculties interview and others don't. There again, some universities do not interview for any subject at all. *Confusing.*

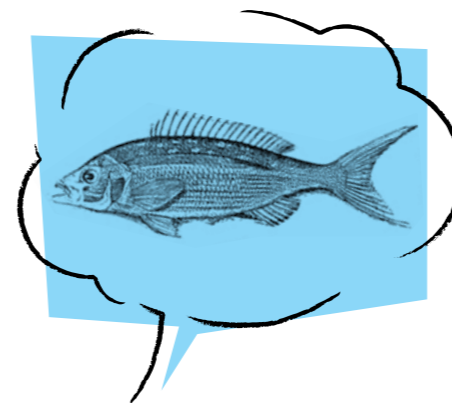
Your university will inform you through UCAS if they want to call you for an interview, but if you want some advanced warning you can phone the admissions office to check up on the general policy. For any future doctors out there, almost all Medicine courses want an interview, and the same goes for Drama.

Whatever course you are planning to study, *Pure Potential* will show you what the interviewers are looking for and how you can best portray yourself as a student the universities should be fighting over!

If you come along to one of our summer events, our communications expert will give you invaluable advice on how to present yourself, answer difficult questions and beat nerves.



WHAT ARE UNIVERSITY INTERVIEWERS LOOKING FOR?



1. Motivation

How much do you really want to study your subject? Remember, your interviewer may have devoted his or her professional life to the subject you want to study for three years or more so they want to meet people whose passion reflects their own. Speaking with enthusiasm and discussing the variety of things you've done which are linked to your subject - both inside and outside the classroom - will make a good impression. Remember that nothing conveys passion as much as independent research and reading done in your own time.

2. Potential

Will you be better tomorrow than you are today? How about the day after that? And the day... you get the idea. Interviewers know that everyone has had different opportunities during their education, and they're going to try to look past your current level of ability into the future. The best way of showing this potential is by trying to respond intelligently to all the questions you're asked, especially the ones that you've never considered before or don't know the answer to straight away. Don't worry about gaps in your knowledge, just try to be logical and clear in your thinking.

3. Teachability

Are you going to benefit from a university course? Will you turn up to lectures and tutorials and, more importantly, will you learn anything while you're there? Will your teacher find it interesting to teach you? Interviewers want to see someone with an inquisitive mind that's open and hungry for new ideas. Ask questions during the interview - it's a two way process, and if you come out knowing something you didn't know before you went in, the chances are you will have proved your teachability.

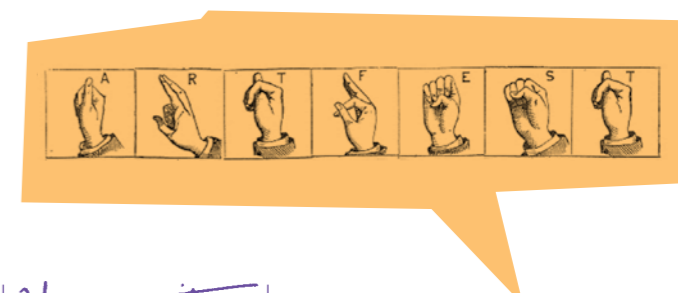
Below is a list of the *qualities* that most interviewers want to see in potential students.

4. Personality

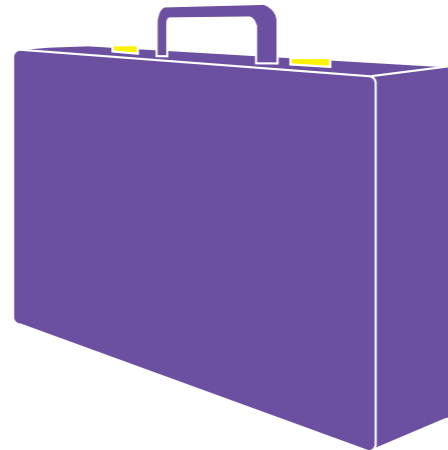
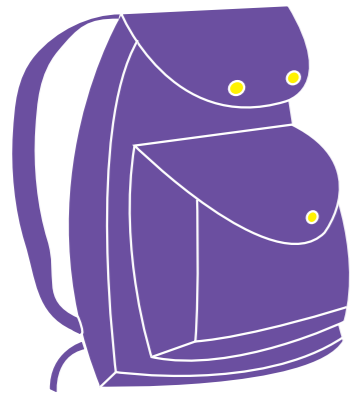
Who are you? Are you going to be an asset to the university, and a fun and interesting person to spend three years or more with? Pretty obvious stuff: just let your natural charm shine through, and don't let the apparent formality of the occasion intimidate you into clamming up. It may be of some comfort to know that very few interviewees manage to 'be themselves' in an interview situation, and nerves are the norm.

5. Knowledge

Most people think this is the most important thing you can possibly show at interview, but we find it's the least important of the top five criteria. The interview is NOT an exam. No-one is going to just test you on what you know. Remember that the interviewer knows that everyone has experienced different standards of teaching; it wouldn't be fair or helpful to expect the same levels of knowledge from all candidates, or to use it as the sole measure of ability. However, remember that you must show the most important quality, motivation, through your love of the A-Level course and your outside reading and further investigation of the subject. What would you make of someone who claimed to be a Liverpool fan, but had never heard of Steven Gerrard? If an interviewer meets someone with a total lack of knowledge, they're likely to interpret that as an absence of real passion for the subject.



WORK EXPERIENCE



Work experience is a fantastic way to work out what you might like to do as a future career, *develop skills* which will be of use in any working environment and supplement your income whilst you are studying.

For useful help and advice on all aspects of work experience, plus a search engine to help you find current opportunities, check out

www.work-experience.org

Although it can sometimes seem like an unnecessary extra stage in the process of getting a job, a candidate without any experience on his or her CV will certainly be at a disadvantage when it comes to getting hired. For this reason alone, it's definitely worth beginning to consider work experience as soon as possible.

WHAT IS WORK EXPERIENCE?

All work gives us some kind of experience. Don't dismiss bar work or working behind the counter in the video shop just because they didn't specifically involve aspects of the career you want in the future, you can gain important transferable skills such as time management, team work, communication skills and planning. Here, however, we're going to look at sector-specific work experience, which can be divided into three main categories - voluntary work, student placement schemes and informal internships.

VOLUNTARY WORK

Doing voluntary work with a registered charity or non-governmental organisation shows passion and integrity, as well as a practical mindset. The main reason for undertaking voluntary work is a desire to improve some area of people's lives, but a subsidiary benefit is that it will always impress an employer, and in many professional areas (such as politics, medicine or law) experience through voluntary work can relate directly to the career itself. For example, doctors may be able to cite voluntary work as proof of the basic altruism which forms part of their professional code, and they may also use it to gain insight into the health challenges facing a particular sector of society, such as the homeless.

STUDENT PLACEMENT SCHEMES

The second kind of work experience is the most readily available and accessible, and generally has a simple (though often highly competitive) application process. It consists of a fixed period of paid work within a company, during which students will often be given quite a high degree of personal responsibility. This is a well-established route into industry, law, business and financial services. Investment banks, for example, tend to run summer internships and most big law firms have an equivalent programme called a 'vacation scheme'. Students typically do these placements for 4-12 weeks over the summer holidays before starting their final year. Application deadlines tend to be several months in advance, so don't leave things too late.

Details of these schemes can be found on the individual website of the company, or, if you're not sure what kind of business experience you want, submit your CV to www.step.org.uk and they will help you find the right placement. This type of work experience is ideal as it is paid and gives you a real insight into working in your chosen industry, as well as teaching you new skills. In addition, no company or firm ever forgets a talented and enthusiastic intern, and it can be a great foothold when it's time to apply for a full-time graduate job.

INFORMAL INTERNSHIPS

The final type of work experience is a little harder to define, and places can be much harder to get. They tend to be the norm in creative industries where there is a looser and smaller structure to the

business, such as film and television production, publishing, journalism or art sales. The danger with this type of placement is that it can often be unpaid and involve a lot of photocopying/coffee-making without much real experience. Even if you don't get that much responsibility, however, these internships can be great in terms of the contacts you make and people you meet.

Generally speaking, getting this kind of internship requires a little bit of research and a great deal of persistence. Identify an individual at an outfit you respect and write to them personally asking for the chance to shadow them. Adopting an approach such as this is referred to as making a 'speculative application'.

TIPS ON HOW TO APPLY

Do the research. Identify the field of work which you wish to enter, be sure that the company you write to offers the role that appeals to you.

Go on to the organisation's website. Look for a jobs/careers section - you could apply for an advertised vacancy. Read about their culture and latest developments.

Be specific: always address your letters to a person rather than a 'Dear Sir/Madam'. You are more likely to get a response.

Telephone the organisation and ask if they need any temporary help.

Send a CV with a cover letter or covering email. It's important that you have a concise CV (2 pages is the maximum) and a letter no longer than 400 words. The next two pages will go into further details on what to include.

Inform the recipient that you will contact them with a follow-up telephone call a week later, this shows enthusiasm. Be sure to contact them and have your letter and CV in front of you when you do. Be polite, but don't be too ready to accept the brush off.

Have the letter and CV checked by another person before you send it so they can look at it objectively.

Ask around - what do your parents, friends' parents, teachers, tutors do? Can they help or put you in touch with someone?

State your availability. Give a potential start date and indicate for how long you can work.

WRITING YOUR CV

Curriculum Vitae, which means 'the course of one's life' in Latin, can also be interpreted as 'please don't bin my application'.

A CV is the basis on which an employer selects which candidates to interview or even hire, as it contains all the information they need to see how suitable that person is for the job. It doesn't matter how amazing you are or how much of an asset you'd be to a company - if you can't communicate it through your CV, you'll never get anywhere. For this reason, it's worth spending time working on it, as a little effort will make a huge difference, and will distinguish you from a whole pile of other candidates.

WHAT TO INCLUDE

Brevity is extremely important to make a positive first impression: never let your CV expand beyond two sides of A4, preferably one side (yes, we are serious!). In fact even the CV's of middle-aged professionals with a lot more experience under their belts are often kept to one side.

With that in mind, you have to consider what kind of information to include. The essentials are a contact number, email address, your date of birth, address, your academic results and any work experience. Optional extras are anything you feel will make you stand out as a candidate, such as charity

work, language and IT skills, special interests and hobbies, or sporting achievements and positions of responsibility. Don't include a photograph (if it actually did influence your boss it's probably not the sort of place you'd want to work anyway...) or any extra personal information unless it is specifically required. Depending on what you're applying for, you may include the contact details of two referees (preferably a teacher and former employer).

You need to picture your CV appearing on somebody's desk with a pile of others, and think about how it's going to make an instant impact. The information must be clearly laid out, so use bullet points instead of continuous sentences. Break the information up with subheadings (Work Experience, Academic Achievements etc.), and have clear divisions, although don't make your format too fussy by using lots of boxes or borders. Many desktop software packages include a CV wizard to help you with the layout. Although this programme can be a help, it's not essential - just use a simple font, space out the information and underline or embolden each new subheading. The key thing to remember is that all of your achievements must be easily identifiable so that a potential employer can skim read your CV and pick up the vital information quickly.

YOUR
PERFECT
JOB

HOW TO STRUCTURE YOUR CV

There are many good ways of structuring a CV. As long as you are clear, concise but comprehensive and you follow a logical progression, your CV should be fine.

Here is one example of a CV structure:

Personal Details:

Begin with your name, then address and contact details, then date of birth.

Education:

Organise these in chronological order including:

- Your degree subject and university, or if you are not yet at university, your intended degree course and university
- A-level or equivalent subjects and grades, or predicted grades, and additional qualifications such as AEs
- GCSEs

Work Experience:

Again start with your most recent job and work backwards. Some people don't include jobs they think won't cast them in a good light. Just remember that everyone was young once, and the managing director of Sainsbury's probably spent a summer stacking shelves there as a teenager. Any job shows you've got the initiative to seek work, and the willingness to see something through, even if the task itself might be a little mundane.

Other Relevant Experience:

Sports, languages etc., broken up into logical sections.

Referees:

Give the name and contact details of two referees or state that they are "Available on request". You should contact your referees in advance to check that they are happy to provide a reference and to give them some basic information about the job - not only is this polite, but it also increases the chance of them giving you a great reference!

FINAL NOTE

One last thing before you send it off - don't photocopy your CV too many times. If it starts to look a little worn around the edges, people may wonder how many you've been sending out! Try to print a new copy for each application.

APPLICATION FORMS

It's worth mentioning that in the last few years CVs have been replaced in many careers by application forms. In addition to asking for all the standard information, these forms will often have such arcane questions as 'Describe a situation where you have persuaded others to follow your ideas'. When faced with such impenetrable riddles, remember three things. Firstly, match the style of your answers to the nature of the job on offer. Aspiring journalists might answer in flowing prose, whilst wannabe lawyers should restrict themselves to bullet points. Secondly, if you want to know what qualities your answer should bring out, read the company's prospectus and website. If they describe themselves as a 'challenging, dynamic and forward-looking firm', give an answer that makes you look dynamic, forward-looking and ready to meet new challenges! Finally, choose an example that matches the nature of the job on offer - if you're applying to an investment bank, describe a situation that demonstrates your financial or commercial awareness.

SAMPLE

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