Orkney Schools

1. Information Support Booklet

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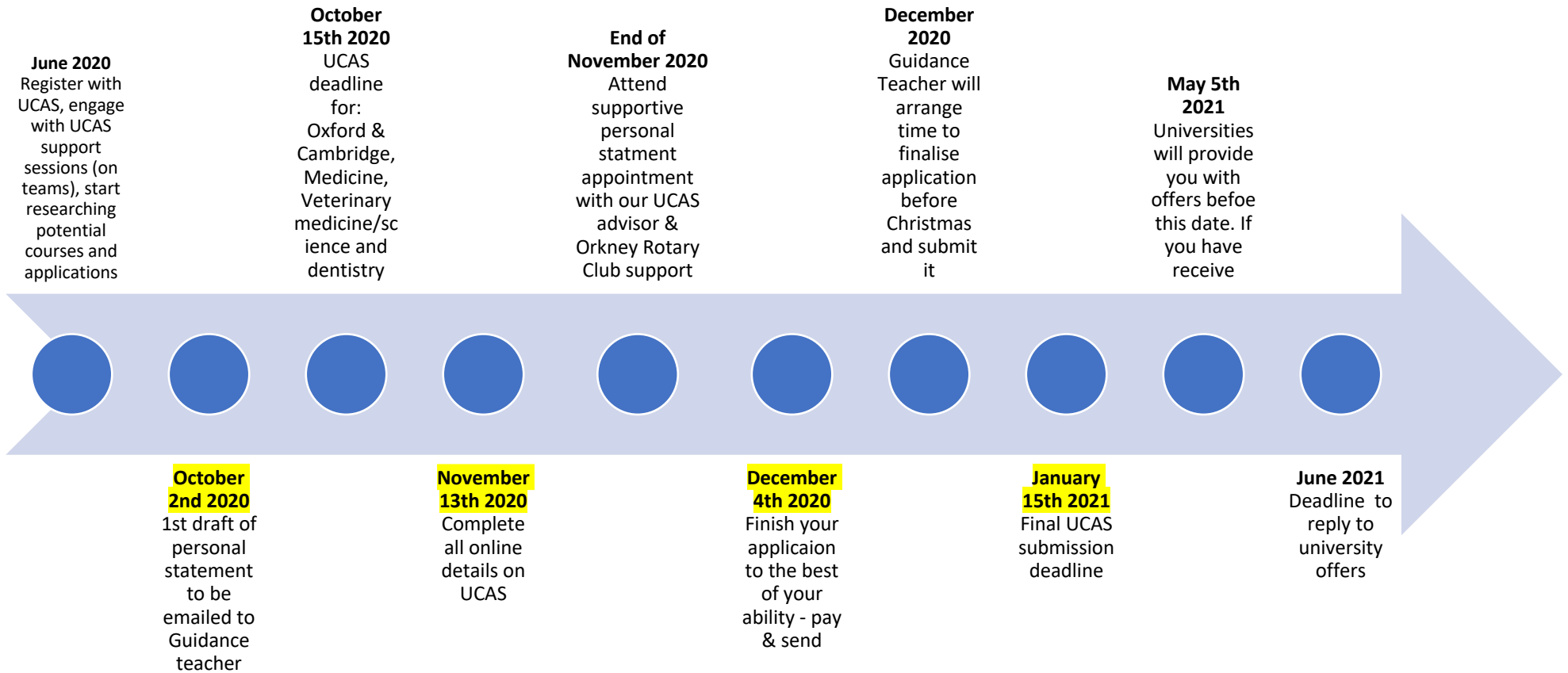
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UCAS Process

College and university can offer an environment rich in social and cultural experiences. It can also help further your career prospects by gaining valuable new skills and knowledge sought by employers, which will open more doors to many jobs. If you think this is for you and you should have the necessary qualifications by the time you leave school, then applying through UCAS is the next step.

This is a very important and time-consuming process. This booklet, along with advice from your Guidance Teacher, will help you through this potentially daunting process. Getting your UCAS application in before the deadline is just a series of stages:

1. Do some research of potential courses & Universities that interest you
2. Narrow down the options for courses you wish to study
3. Register on UCAS
4. Start a personal statement focusing on these courses
5. Complete full application online
6. Wait for the offers from universities to come in

UCAS timeline and deadlines

June 2020
Register with UCAS, engage with UCAS support sessions (on teams), start researching potential courses and applications

October 15th 2020
UCAS deadline for: Oxford & Cambridge, Medicine, Veterinary medicine/science and dentistry

End of November 2020
Attend supportive personal statment appointment with our UCAS advisor & Orkney Rotary Club support

December 2020
Guidance Teacher will arrange time to finalise application before Christmas and submit it

May 5th 2021
Universities will provide you with offers befoe this date. If you have receive

October 2nd 2020
1st draft of personal statement to be emailed to Guidance teacher

November 13th 2020
Complete all online details on UCAS

December 4th 2020
Finish your applicaion to the best of your ability - pay & send

January 15th 2021
Final UCAS submission deadline

June 2021
Deadline to reply to university offers

How to register

Watch the following useful 3-minute video:
https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/filling-your-ucas-undergraduate-application

What you need to do:

1. Create an account on www.ucas.com. Use your personal email address. Set a password.
2. Add the KGS Buzzword – **KGS2021**
3. Sign in and start completing your application – using the support information below:

Personal Details | **This section contains information about yourself.**

- Try to avoid using a silly, rude or potentially offensive email address when entering your contact details. Although you and your friends might find it funny, the universities you are applying to might not. In oversubscribed courses, where admission tutors are finding it difficult to decide who gets accepted, it might be a factor that counts against you. If you have an email address which might be interpreted as immature, set up a new account for the duration of your UCAS application.
- It is important that you select the correct fee code in the student support section. This indicates how you will be funded when you go to university. From the drop-down menu, select: **02 UK, Chl. loM or EU Student finance services**.
- Select: **Student AA Scotland** from the alphabetical list of organisations in the next box. The Student Awards Agency for Scotland is the organisation who will pay your tuition fees. If you get this section wrong, you will have to pay your fees yourself!!
- Nominated Access - This will be useful to add if you know are going to be away from home for a long period at a time, e.g. on a gap year. It is also someone that you have given permission to speak to the universities on your behalf – this could possibly be a parent/carer and/or Guidance teacher

Choices	**This section details the university courses you are applying for.**

- Most applicants are entitled to choose a maximum of **five** courses when applying to UCAS. The exceptions to this are applicants for dentistry, medicine, veterinary science or veterinary medicine who are restricted to a maximum of four choices in any one of these subjects. However, they can still select a fifth course as a back up
- If you are planning to take a year out, click on the '**Defer Entry'** box.
- Applicants to Oxford or Cambridge cannot apply to both universities in the same year (Deadline 15th October)
- Leave the point of entry box blank unless you have agreed with the university or college that they are willing to consider your application to start the course after first year.
- When an applicant applies to a course that may require them to attend for an interview or audition or provide a portfolio of work, essay or other piece of work, a message will display this information
- You will be asked in this section whether you intend to live at home. If you select no, you will be sent details of university accommodation. Leave the point of entry box blank unless you have agreed with the university or college that they are willing to consider your application to start the course after first year.

Education	**This section details all of your educational qualifications and courses you are currently studying.**

- You need to enter the details of a qualification you have already passed from S4 & S5.
- For your S6 subjects, select 'Pending'.
- You need to enter your candidate number – if you don't know this, ask your Guidance teacher/front office.
- When you come to enter some of the courses you have sat or are sitting, you will sometimes be faced with more than one choice for some subjects. These choices will have different course codes. it is important that you choose the correct one.

| **Employment** | **Details of any jobs you have had.** |

| **Personal Statement** | **A short reflective essay about yourself.** |

- This is one of the most important aspects of your application and will take the most amount of time and brain space. Your personal statement will help the university admissions tutors decide whether to accept you for the course or not.
- 4000 characters in total (includes spaces)
- More specific support will be provided in the next section of this booklet

Personal Statement

Writing an eye-catching personal statement could be the very thing that earns you a place studying your dream subject at your dream university. Your personal statement is your first opportunity to showcase your ambitions, skills, knowledge and experiences in your own words. A personal statement also communicates your passion and flair for your subject. It's a piece of writing that's personal to you. Look at the videos and support on the UCAS website along with using this booklet and the other pupil work booklet, to support you in this important piece of the jigsaw.

The basics

- No more than 4,000 characters (including spaces)
- In clear paragraphs, with accurate spelling and grammar
- UCAS use 'similarity software' so no copying anyone else
- Your personal statement needs to be the truth
- Take your time and use all of the help available (home, school, outside UCAS advisor (David Allan)) to support you in doing your best personal statement.

What are Universities looking for?

- Display **maturity** – show that you are ready for university
- Display **ability** – show that you have the academic and personal skills and ability to do well in university
- Display **commitment** – show that you have the dedication, reliability and suitability to do well in University
- Display **knowledge** – show that you have an awareness and familiarity with the subject area and courses that you are applying for
- Display **insight** – show an understanding about the course and how this will help you towards your career goals

- Display **research** – showing that you have researched the course/career will support your personal statement – look at the course page on the university website
- Sell yourself to the university
- Reflect your commitment and suitability for the course
- Be clear and concise – no waffle!

Hints & tips

- Big yourself up - don't be shy and retiring in what you are saying about yourself
- The best personal statements are the ones that sound genuine. Don't use language that doesn't sound natural to you. If you wouldn't say it, think about why you want to write it
- Consistency in your course choice makes the Personal Statement easier to write
- You will need to write a few drafts to get it right
- Don't worry if you go well over 4000 characters. We can cut out and streamline parts to make it fit within this challenging word count
- Get someone else (parent/friends?) to look over it and offer advice
- Ask yourself if it makes sense? Does it flow? Can you say "so what?" to anything in it? Have you shown that you're a reflective thinker? Have you detailed the experiences you have had and the skills that you have gained from them? Have you worked out what information is the most important and 'adds value' to what is being discussed in your statement? Have you shown evidence to demonstrate this?

What makes an effective Personal Statement?

- Discuss your choice of course – what interests you about the course?
- Detail any background interest in the area that you are applying for
- Detail any relevant experience, explaining the skills you have developed through this experience and link it back to your choices. (employment,

volunteering, Duke of Edinburgh, house captains, young enterprise, work experience, sports, drama, music clubs etc)

- Personal achievements
- Positions of responsibility (within school & outside of school)
- Show that you have the skills suited to university life (self-motivated, hardworking, committed)
- Show yourself to be an interesting personality. Try to be specific rather than general about your interests and experiences.

Personal statement structure

In the same way you might when you write an essay, it's easiest to break down your personal statement into smaller, manageable chunks. Remember, you are applying to be a student – show enthusiasm for your learning and the subject you're applying for, aim for the statement to be about 70% 'academic' and 30% about your extra-curricular achievements.

The Opening

This is the most important part of your personal statement. Make it stick out from the crowd. It should be memorable, strong and punchy (get to the point quickly). You need to prove that you know what you're applying for.

It must communicate your excitement, enthusiasm and motivation to succeed. Don't just say you find the subject interesting – explain **WHY** you find it interesting. Avoid the "I have always been interested in ... since being a child...." route into the statement. Try and find something to say about what has ignited your interest in a particular subject area. ***For example, "Whilst learning about xxxxx, I became fascinated in how this had developed xxxxx, which led me to research xxxx" - better example to develop!!

Be succinct and draw the reader in, but don't be tempted to use gimmicks or puns. Be honest and use personal examples to demonstrate your commitment to studying your chosen subject.

The Middle

This is where you flesh out your suitability and experiences and is the main body of your personal statement. Can you go into detail about a specific life experience, or AH project/assignment, or a journal that motivated you that links to the course you are applying for?
In the middle section try include your:

- ✓ **Academic skills** – If you're already studying the subject, include which parts of it have inspired you and why. If you're applying to study a new subject, think about how your current subjects link to your chosen degree.

- ✓ **Interpersonal skills** – Pepper the middle with transferable interpersonal skills, which the University might be looking for. Always back each skill up with a practical example of how you've applied it in the real world, whether it's a part-time job, by taking part in sport, or by winning an award.

- ✓ **Hobbies and interests** – Link these to your course if you can, but even if you can't, they'll demonstrate that you're a well-rounded individual who actively takes part and isn't afraid to get involved. Don't forget to include why you enjoy what you do and how it's all helped to make you who you are today.

The Ending

Think of this as the part where you bring together your passion, suitability, and motivations. Succinctly, revisit the key points you want the university to remember the most, and summarise how they all contribute to making you a great candidate for the course.

Finally, make your ending forward-looking, dynamic and optimistic. You don't need to plan out the next twenty years of your life, but try to show how your chosen course ties into your future career plans.

Vocabulary and Grammar

Write your personal statement naturally, letting your passion and positively shine through. Keep sentences short and simple. Scan through course information on university websites, and write down words and terms to use when describing your interests in particular subjects. Using active and dynamic words can really help your personal statement stand out.

Show your academic prowess and personal skills with words and phrases like:

Well organised
Meeting deadline
Critical thinking
Research
Evaluation
Analysing
Investigate
Experimental
Working independently
Problem solving
Responsible
Co-operating and teamwork
Time management
Independent and pro-active
Trustworthy and reliable
Using initiative
Self-motivated

Below is advice about using "I" that will make your personal statement easier to read.

Do not write	Instead write
I am captain of the football team ...	Being captain of the football team ...
I enjoy playing sport ...	Having enjoyed playing netball ...
I am studying Highers in ...	My Higher subjects are ...
I enjoy socialising ...	Socialising is important to me because ...
I have taken part in ...	Taking part in ...
I have gained a number of skills ...	The skills I have gained from ...

What happens next ……..?

Once you are happy with your application and have finalised it by clicking on the 'pay and send' option. Your Guidance teacher will contact you and arrange a suitable time to sit down with you, go through their 'reference' and 'predicted grades' for S6. Once you are both happy with all aspects of the application, then it gets sent to UCAS and there is no going back …. Just wait for the offers!

Final UCAS Deadlines

- You and your Guidance Teacher will be wanting to submit your application long before the final deadline – check the timeline at the beginning of the booklet for this information
- 15th October 2020 – All Oxford/Cambridge, Dentistry, Medicine, Veterinary Medicine/Science
- 15th January 2021 – Deadline for all other undergraduate applications

Pay and send

This is paying UCAS for processing your application and must be paid by debit card online. The cost is £20 if you are applying for just one University course and £25 if applying for between 2-5 courses.

Reference and predicated grades

Your application must include a reference. It will be 4000 characters in length and provides the universities with a greater understanding of your academic achievements and skills. It will also highlight some of your extra-curricular qualities and achievements. The reference will be completed by your Guidance Teacher - as they know you best within the school.

To support them in writing your reference, your Guidance teacher will discuss with you, which subjects and teachers to contact for more specific positive details of how you are in the classroom. Also, your Guidance teacher will ask you to complete a sheet, which documents some of your school & extra-curricular activity achievements. They will go through this reference with you before the application is fully submitted to UCAS.

Your S6 teachers will also provide your Guidance teacher with a predicted grade for the courses that you are currently completing. This will be based on the level of work that you are producing in class.

Interviews

Some Universities will invite you to an interview or audition before deciding what offers to make to you. Your invitation could be sent to you through your personal email address or through 'UCAS Track'.

Here is a link to some useful resources, advice and videos to help you prepare for an interview:
https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/after-you-apply/undergraduate-interview-invitations

Offers

Universities need to get back to you before **5th May 2021** with their offers for each of your courses. Each offer will be either:

- An **unconditional offer:** means you've got a place … well done!!
- A **conditional offer:** means you still need to meet the requirements – usually S6 exam results.
- An **unsuccessful** or **withdrawn** choice removes that option, but you could add more.

Either a conditional or unconditional offer is good news.

You must reply to these offers, through 'UCAS Track' before the deadline of 4th June 2021 or 18th June 2021. The date depends on when you have received all your offers by.

You can accept a maximum of two offers. This must be made at the same time.

- **Firm choice**: this is your <u>first choice</u> – the place you most want to go to. If you accept a conditional offer and meet the conditions, you'll have a confirmed place here. If this is an unconditional, you don't need to choose an insurance choice.

- **Insurance choice**: this is the choice you'd want if you didn't meet the conditions of your firm choice. If this were a conditional offer, you'd need to meet the conditions for your place to be confirmed.

Resources and online support

- www.ucas.com - Provide all UCAS information, including useful support videos to help you with your application.
- www.myworldofwork.co.uk - Skills Development Scotland (SDS) website that you will have used in your PSE lessons to support you in your career management.
- www.planitplus.net - 'Courses' tool at the top right of the page is great to find out what Universities offer courses that interest you.
- http://unistats.direct.gov.uk - This website has detailed information on the entrance requirement to courses. It also includes a survey of current students' views of their course; including how it is taught and assessed; level of academic support provided; availability of learning resources including libraries and IT facilities; and employment destinations for graduates.
- www.push.co.uk - PUSH Online is the ultimate guide to student life, researched by students and recent graduates. It includes brief university profiles, university links to student unions/newspaper websites and much more.
- www.prospects.ac.uk - A guide to graduate careers, jobs and postgraduate study in the UK. It gives information about employment opportunities in its 'What do graduates do' section.
- www.saas.gov.uk - Student Awards Agency for Scotland – Information on all aspects of student funding, including bursaries and student loans. Scottish students studying in Scotland, do not need pay tuition fees for their course. Some students may be eligible for a non-repayable 'Young Student Bursary', depending on the level of their family's income.
- www.lattitude.org.uk - Provides information on GAP Year opportunities, including volunteer placements in over 30 countries around the world.

Below is the various Scottish Universities websites that will provide you with detailed information on courses and entry requirements.

- www.abdn.ac.uk - Aberdeen University
- www.abertay.ac.uk - Abertay University (Dundee)
- www.caledonian.ac.uk - Glasgow Caledonian University
- www.dundee.ac.uk - Dundee University
- www.ed.ac.uk - Edinburgh University
- www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/edinburgh-college-art - Edinburgh College of Art
- www.gla.ac.uk - Glasgow University
- www.gsa.ac.uk - Glasgow School of Art
- www.uhi.ac.uk - University of Highlands and Islands
- www.hw.ac.uk - Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh)
- www.napier.ac.uk - Napier University (Edinburgh)
- www.qmu.ac.uk - Queen Margaret University (Edinburgh)
- www.rgu.ac.uk - Robert Gordon University (Aberdeen)
- www.rcs.ac.uk - Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (Glasgow)
- www.st-andrews.ac.uk - St Andrews University
- www.sruc.ac.uk - Scottish Agriculture College (various campuses across Scotland)
- www.stir.ac.uk - Stirling University
- www.strath.ac.uk - Strathclyde University (Glasgow)
- www.uws.ac.uk - University of the West of Scotland (Paisley, Ayr, Dumfries)

UCAS Checklist

Go through the checklist below and tick off the tasks when you have completed them:

<u>Deadline</u>

☐   Create a UCAS account   **June 26th 2020**

☐   Investigate potential courses and Universities   **August 28th 2020**

☐   Complete **personal details** section   **November 13th 2020**

☐   Complete **education** section   **November 13th 2020**

☐   Use pupil workbook to write down skills, qualities, knowledge and experience for personal statement

☐   Email first draft of personal statement to Guidance Teacher   **October 2nd 2020**

☐   Complete your **choices** (up to 5 courses)   **November 13th 2020**

☐   Improve your personal statement, using feedback from this booklet, David Allan and Guidance Teacher

☐   Complete full application – pay & send   **December 4th 2020**

☐   Go through full application with Guidance teacher, they will add in their reference and S6 predicted grades – when everything has been checked fully … send it through to UCAS

☐   Make firm/insurance choices through UCAS Track   **May 2021**