

Applying to Higher Education

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WHY CHOOSE HIGHER EDUCATION?

What are the opportunities and benefits? Are you interested in Higher Education or going straight into employment. Higher Education is not necessarily the best option for everyone. Only you can decide whether it is right for you.

So - Why take a degree course?

- More and more jobs require a degree or diploma for entry and promotion.
- The range of employers recruiting people who have undertaken higher education is increasing.
- By the year 2000, the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) has estimated that of all the jobs available, 70% will require a substantial quantity of "cerebral" skills, which can only be developed through Higher Education.

What are the advantages of Higher Education?

- Graduates are more adaptable to change.
- The percentage of graduates in responsible, senior management positions is **increasing**, and these are usually the **best paid**.
- Higher Education **develops**:
 - ◆ Subject knowledge.
 - ◆ Independence.
 - ◆ Ability to learn.
 - ◆ Constructive thinking.
 - ◆ Ability to work without close supervision.
 - ◆ Organisational skills.
 - ◆ Communication skills.
 - ◆ Social skills.
- Higher Education offers the **opportunity to**:
 - ◆ Achieve you full academic potential.
 - ◆ Develop your interpersonal and professional skills and so achieve your career goals.
 - ◆ Realise your full potential, including sporting, recreational & cultural ambitions.
 - ◆ Take advantage of one of the best clubs in the world - "The Students Union".
 - ◆ Come into contact with students from different countries, cultures, and creeds.
 - ◆ Experience a completely "open" environment, free of dogma, domination and discrimination.
 - ◆ Make life-lasting friendships and relationships.
 - ◆ Undergo what could be one of the most enjoyable, exciting and rewarding experiences of your life.

What are the drawbacks to Higher Education?

- If you don't address all the issues regarding your choice of Higher Education course, you may become disillusioned, depressed and demoralised about your studies.
- Increasingly, it is becoming financially more difficult to undertake Higher Education.
- You will remain relatively poor for a longer period of time.
- You will have to take out a student loan.
- You will not necessarily find a job immediately after graduation, paying a salary commensurate with your talents and skills.
- The support and consolation of the home environment may not be directly available.
- You may feel some initial disorientation and trauma as a result of so many "new" things happening all at once.
- For some of you, the new-found freedom and lack of external discipline may lead to confusion, over-reaction and possible disruption to studies.
- You may lose touch with some of your old friends and well established close relationships can break down.
- Your entry into the **real world** is delayed by three or four years, so possibly you will "mature" at a slower rate initially and do not become "worldly-wise" until much later.

TYPES OF ESTABLISHMENT

UNIVERSITIES

There used to be a choice between Universities and Polytechnics. The main difference was that at a University you studied to degree level, whereas at the Polytechnic you studied to Higher National Diploma (HND) standard (slightly lower than a degree). However, the polytechnics have now become universities - so there is no longer that difference. Obviously some universities have been around much longer than others have!

A. “Oxbridge”

There is no such thing as “Oxbridge” - these are two quite separate universities (Oxford and Cambridge) each comprising about thirty colleges which admit their own students. These universities have long histories and pre-date most of other universities by several centuries.

B. “Redbrick”

These are universities, which were founded, in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century in or near large cities. They offer a diversity of degree course and competition for places on some courses can be nearly as fierce as that for “Oxbridge”. Examples include Liverpool, Bristol, London, Durham and Manchester.

C. “Campus” or “Plate Glass

These are universities, which were founded in the era of education expansion in the 1960’s. They are built on one site and are usually a few miles removed from the nearest town. Examples include York, East Anglia, Sussex and Lancashire.

We usually think nowadays of campus universities being those where everything is on one site and is usually self-contained, like Kent. Alternatively a city university like Greenwich, with sites spread all over the local area - for example Greenwich has sites at Woolwich, Eltham, Dartford and Chatham.

COLLEGES/INSTITUTES of HIGHER EDUCATION

These have evolved from mergers between Technical or further Education Colleges and Colleges of Higher Education. Many of these institutions continue to provide teacher-training courses via the B.Ed degree but they have also diversified their courses to include professional diploma courses and degrees in the humanities and social sciences. Colleges of Higher Education usually make much lower offers to students than universities. Examples include the

Liverpool Institute of Higher Education, Cardiff Institute of Higher Education, Chester College and Edge Hill College.

OTHER COLLEGES OFFERING HIGHER EDUCATION COURSES

There are also a number of Colleges, which are of specialist nature and include institutions such as Colleges of art, Colleges of music and Colleges of agriculture. Examples include Wye College, Writtle College and Kent Institute of Art and Design (KIAD). There are also many Colleges of Further Education, which are affiliated to a “parent” university, and the degree or diploma is awarded by that institution. Examples are NorthWest Kent College of Technology and Mid Kent College of Technology.

TYPES OF COURSE

DEGREE COURSES

➤ **Single Subject Courses**

You concentrate on **one** subject, i.e. Music, Physics History etc. There may be optional subjects or subsidiary subjects i.e. Philosophy, Politics and Economics. These courses may be more popular than combined courses, therefore, more difficult to get on.

➤ **Joint Courses**

Two single subjects are joined together i.e. English and History, Politics and Economics. You usually do 50% of work for each subject. It may be possible to 'Major' in one subject and to study the subject as a 'Minor'

➤ **Combined Courses**

A number of options are offered and students select from a group of subjects.

➤ **Modular Courses**

The course is divided into "modules" or sections, which are taught or examined separately with no final examinations. A full time student might be expected to pass the equivalent of $\frac{3}{4}$ modules in a term, building up to a total of 20 or 30 modules of work over a three-year course.

DIPLOMA COURSES

➤ **Vocational Courses**

Courses that are directly related to a job and lead to a qualification. i.e. construction, engineering, business studies, accounting, journalism and advertising. These are often HND and are a natural progression from GNVQ courses. They are usually of two years duration. Having completed an HND, you can, if your grades are satisfactory, progress to the second year of a degree, exceptionally you will be able to progress straight into the third year of a degree course.

➤ **Professional Courses**

Offered at some institutions and leading to, or gives exemption from the examinations of professional bodies – i.e. law, insurance, personnel management and engineering.

SANDWICH COURSES

- These are courses combining study with a work placement. This can be either a block placement of one year, or several shorter placements spread out during the course.

FOUNDATION COURSES

- Some areas, usually engineering and science offer an additional first year to allow students who do not hold the required entry requirements to enter specialised courses. May also be known as 'Year Zero'.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

- There are minimum requirements for degree and diploma courses, but most admissions tutors will ask for more than these! Entrance requirements are more often related to the popularity of a course than to its difficulty. Higher demand usually results in higher requirements, so it is sensible to check using **ECCTIS, PUSH CD, or Degree Course Offers 1997** how popular a course is before applying to it.
- The minimum requirements for a first degree or diploma is:

Two “A” Levels at grade E or a GNVQ Pass.
- Some diploma courses will accept applicants with just one “A” Level pass at grade E. Most Universities and Colleges will, however, stipulate much higher grades, and many degree courses require a third “A” Level or GNVQ Distinction.
- Universities do also look for “good” GCSE grades, meaning **five at grade C** or above.
 - ◆ You should certainly be holding, or expected to gain **English & Mathematics** at grade C or above.
 - ◆ For entrance on a B.Ed. programme you would also need **Science** at grade C or above.

You must study the “**University and College Entrance Guide 1999**” and the individual prospectuses to be certain which combinations of subjects and grades are acceptable.

The Leigh City Technology College has a “Compact” agreement with both the Universities of **Kent** and **Greenwich**. This means that they may accept you on a course with the minimum requirements, with the recommendation of the Leigh C.T.C. Obviously they would not welcome you with open arms, if we did not recommend your hard work and strong motivation to them.

You should seriously consider applying to at least one of them out of your choice of six.

You are under no commitment and do not have to attend either of these universities if you are offered places at other universities, which you would prefer to go to.

CHOOSING WHAT TO STUDY

The choice of course should ideally be made before you decide where to study, but the two decisions do go hand in hand.

When deciding what to study there are three main options; - Do you want to study:-

➤ A “Vocational Course.

If you have a career in mind your decision may be made for you. For example, if you want to be a lawyer, doctor or architect, you will probably have to do the relevant courses – although don’t assume that this applies for all careers.

➤ One of the subjects you are currently studying.

You should check the specific course details. The same subject in different institutions can vary considerably. Prospectuses and course leaflets are essential here.

➤ Something new.

For many courses prior knowledge is **not** needed, so don’t worry if you are not keen to carry on with any of your “A” Level subjects. Similarly GNVQ students don’t have to stay in the same vocational area. If you’ve done say Business Studies, you could consider many courses such as, Economics and Social Sciences, as well as Business Studies. A traditional **single** honours course is only one of the many options. Most institutions now offer **combined** degrees, and choosing one of these doesn’t mean more work, just more choices.

PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- What courses are open to you with your current qualifications?
- Which courses interest you?
- How do your predicted grades match the demands of the course that interests you?
- Some courses require relevant work experience – do you have this?
- Do you have a particular career in mind that may require a specific course?

CHOOSING WHERE TO STUDY

Once you've decided what to study, here are some things to bear in mind before deciding where to do it!

- **Location** – do you want to study in a particular part of the country?. Do you want to live at home or go as far away as possible?
- **Cost** – if you do move away from home, then you will want to know the cost of travel, food and other living expenses.
- **Accommodation** – is it guaranteed? What is available and how much is it? Some universities have attractive on-campus student villages, whilst others provide off-campus accommodation, or traditional halls of residence. Think about which you would prefer.
- **Size & Type** of University/College – Old or New/Campus/City/Large Town.
- **Student numbers** – do you want to be one of many or are you aiming for smaller numbers?
- **Local facilities** – what is there in the area? The Push Guide can give you extra information about the places you are considering.
- **Special facilities** – e.g. Social/Leisure facilities.

ACADEMIC QUESTIONS

Once you've considered these fairly practical points you will also need to consider some academic aspects – the most important are:-

- **Academic facilities** – check out libraries, computer facilities and anything else relevant to your course. Every institution will assure you that these facilities exist, but try to find out more.
- **Grades** – will you get the grades required by the universities you are looking at? You will find a wide variation between universities, but also between different courses within the same university. Generally, higher grades are expected for popular courses.
- **Teaching methods** – is the course classroom based or practical, or a mixture of both.
- **Assessment** – different courses are assessed in different ways. Look into whether assessment is mainly by coursework, practical work or exams and consider your strengths and preferences.

Finally, there is no substitution for actually visiting the universities you are interested in, as you can only tell what the atmosphere is like by experiencing it.

HOW TO COMPLETE YOUR UCAS FORM

IT'S ALMOST NEVER TOO EARLY

UCAS (University and Colleges Admissions Systems) will accept applications from the beginning of September in the year before you want to go to university. So it is worth becoming familiar with the form and procedures as soon as the UCAS Handbook is available. (Around mid June). This is available in College, with enough copies for everyone applying to Colleges of Higher Education to have their own copy. The Final date for application (except in very special circumstances) is the **15th December**.

The UCAS system is basically a clearing-house for university application and is designed to make the whole process simple. *Well that's the theory, anyway!*

- Your form will be *reduced by 30%*
- Then it will be **photocopied** by UCAS and sent to **all** the universities you have applied to. However, you will not receive any offers if your form is not up to scratch.

HERE ARE SOME BASIC POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Don't try to fill in the form without using the notes that come with it, plus the UCAS handbook; both these give various codes, which you can't get elsewhere.
- Practise on a photocopy first, then second, then third if necessary. Spelling mistakes, crossings out, errors of grammar etc are guaranteed to any admissions tutors.
- Use black ink or word processor. There is no preference for handwriting or typing, as tutors are really only interested in legibility. Don't forget that the form will be reduced by 30% when UCAS copies it, so admissions tutors are unlikely to spend hours with a magnifying glass trying to decipher your microscopic handwriting.
- Make sure that the form is sent off as early as possible and well before the official 15th December deadline. Universities admissions tutors may spend very little time on these forms and even less time later on in the term, when they may well have several piles of them around their offices.

ALSO

- You have a maximum of 6 Choices of course on the form. You don't have to use **All** of them, although, of course, you are cutting down your chances of being offered a place if you only apply for one or two courses. It is possible to apply for more than one course at the same institution.
- Once you have decided on a subject, you should look at course directories such as the “**University and College Entrance Guide**” to find out where the course is offered and what the entry requirements are.
- Be realistic about the courses you apply to, as, if you apply for 6 courses all asking for much higher grades than you are likely to get, you are probably going to be unsuccessful.
- Talk to your tutors and subject staff, if you are not sure how you are doing academically.
- Make sure you check any GCSE requirements. Many courses require A, B, or C Grades
- Remember not to leave any out, even if you got a D in your Mathematics GCSE for example and are re-sitting it. This actually shows that you are motivated and committed to your studies.
- You **MUST** have a grade at C or above in Mathematics and English possible Science as well.
- Most people have trouble with the personal statement and naturally this is the most important bit (together with the College Reference). For this reason there is a separate page in this booklet about “**Personal Statement Writing**” and another on “**What Admissions Tutors Look For**”.

WHAT DO ADMISSIONS TUTORS LOOK FOR

Unfortunately, admissions tutors are all different and will have slightly different ideas about what they are looking for in an applicant, but there are certain things they will **ALL** want to see:

MOTIVATION.

Why do you want to study this subject, and how committed are you?

It is very important to give the impression that you have thought long and hard about this, rather than looking as if you have stuck a pin in a course directory. If you want to study one of the subjects you are taking now do some extra reading to show your commitment. If you intend to go for a new subject, make sure you at least read some basic textbooks to find out what is involved. (Admissions tutors can easily spot those who haven't done this.)

ACADEMIC ABILITY.

Remember your tutors will write your reference based on the standard of work which you have achieved **THIS** year, so don't sit around thinking you can work hard **NEXT** year. The reference will include predicted grades based on your end of year exams and coursework so far. GCSE results really do count – check whether you need to resit any for the course you want to do (Mathematics & English are the important ones although Science is also needed for more and more course, especially teaching).

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE.

For many vocational degrees (and Medicine) this is essential and now is the time to arrange it. Get yourself on some work experience during the holidays. Get as much as possible, making sure that it is related to the subject you that want to take at degree level.

A RESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE.

When you get to University you will find that things are very different from College. You will have a lot more freedom to plan your work, organise your time, express your own opinions, so you need to show that you are not going to crack up in the face of difficult decisions. Therefore, any experience, which shows you to be a mature and responsible adult, helps. (Part-time jobs, positions of responsibility (in or out of College), or voluntary work).

MOTIVATION.

Admissions tutors usually prefer a more sociable applicant with slightly lower predicted grades over the brilliant hermit. If you have no interests, and have never done anything outside your lessons in College, now is the time to change matters. Whether it's drama club, sports, contributing to the life of the College in some way, producing a College magazine (Especially if you want to do Media Studies).

AWARENESS OF THE WORLD.

Admissions tutors appreciate students who can relate their studies to the wider world and this is particularly important for would-be Doctors, Economists, Politicians or Teachers. You should aim to read one of the 'quality' newspapers at least every other day, so that you can show that you have kept up with news over the year. (There's no excuse, as they are in the College Resource Centre {Library} **EVERY DAY**).

Make a plan with these things in mind and your application will look much more impressive and hopefully, will result in plenty of offers.

THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

FORMAT

Your Personal Statement should contain:-

- The **Reasons** for choosing that course:-
 - ◆ A natural complement to “A” Levels/GNVQ’s.
 - ◆ Career aspirations.
- The **opportunities** you have had at The Leigh C.T.C.
 - ◆ Work experience in year 11.
 - ◆ European work experience.
 - ◆ Post 16 Problem Solving.
 - ◆ Company/College initiatives (Caterham Cars).
- **Extra curricular** opportunities – work/training.
- **Responsibilities** at College.
- **Skills**, sports and hobbies.
- **Closing statement.**

REMEMBER

- **Plan** your personal statement in rough first.
- **Follow** the format.
- Decide on your **presentation** technique – hand-written or typed.
- Use **positive** language to instill confidence such as: achieved, administered, selected, and was responsible for, etc..... Show that you have the skills suited to university life.
- **Avoid** the “**I**” syndrome (I did this..... I did that.....) by rewording sentences.
- Be **enthusiastic!** Show that you are somebody who will benefit from life at university and also your chosen course. Show yourself to be an interesting person.
- Provide **accurate** dates, company names, club names and awards.
- **Avoid** subjective comments.

- End on a **positive** note.

PERSONAL STATEMENT (Cont.)

EXAMPLE

I have always been fascinated by the past, beginning with a childhood interest in reading books on time-travel and mythology. A Trip to France in year 12, where I studied issues relating to the World Wars, confirmed my interest in History and my decision to pursue the subject at degree level. At University I look forward to analysing varied interpretations of history and the original sources upon which they are based.

As a College prefect I have held many responsibilities such as organising school events, delivering speeches and participating actively on the Student Democratic Council. These experiences have taught me to use my own initiative and develop my skills of public speaking and diplomacy. I also involve myself fully with the College Dramatic Society and have taken part in several College productions including ‘A Midsummer Nights Dream’ in which I played Quince. Having played in concerts with the keyboard orchestra, I have recently taken up piano lessons and gained a wider awareness of music, especially that of Debussy.

For my year 11 work experience I undertook a placement at The Churchill Theatre in Bromley where I gained valuable knowledge of the many aspects of putting on a large production in a very short space of time. This was followed up in year 12 by a placement at the National Theatre of Holland in Rotterdam, which allowed me to experience different cultures, work styles and way of life in another country. Each year the College undertakes a ‘Problem Solving Competition’ in partnership with many local companies/industries. My team was given the problem of reviewing the current security provision at Longreach sewage treatment works and make suggestions for possible improvement. This exercise proved to me the importance of teamwork and of working to a deadline.

I am an enthusiastic member of the College’s 1st XI football team and basketball squad which compete regularly with other schools/colleges both locally and nationally. Playing in various school sports teams has earned me several awards including that of “Sports Personality of the Year”, and taught me the importance of communication, teamwork and self-reliance.

The time spent during my post 16 studies have given me the necessary confidence and independence I will need at university, and I look forward to the challenges which the course I have chosen to study and university life will give me.

INTERVIEWS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

PREPARATION

- Read the university prospectus thoroughly.
- Plan your journey:-
- Do you know where you are going?
- Are you going by Train, Coach or Car?
- Have you bought your ticket, and is it the best form of transport?
- Can you **WALK** from the coach/train station to the university? Taxi?????
- Do you need to get a taxi?
- Allow plenty of time to get to the university/college.
- Decide what you are going to wear:-
- Look reasonably smart and well presented.
- But most importantly, wear clothes you feel comfortable in.
- Dig out your photocopy of your UCAS form, - *read your personal statement again to see what you said, and be prepared to answer questions on what you have written.*
- Take your Record of Achievement (**RoA**) with you. (make sure that it is up to date, including work experience, problem solving and GCSE certificates)
- Plan **YOUR** questions.

AT THE INTERVIEW

- Be **CONFIDENT** and think **SUCCESS**. Remember have a confident smile on your face and shake hands with your interviewer.
- Be **MOTIVATED**, an offer of a place may rest on the interview.
- **LISTEN** carefully to the questions being asked and to the information being given to you.

AT THE INTERVIEW

Continued.....

- **CONSIDER** your reply. Take the time to ensure that you make a sensible reply to a question. Too much hurry then you could make mistakes.
- **ASK** questions.
- **KNOW** when to **STOP**. It is very easy to ramble. Take care to avoid this.
- But most importantly

RELAX!!!!!!!

Questions you may be asked:

- Why have you chosen this subject?
- Why do you want to come to this university/college?
- Have you had any experience to back up your subject choice?
- What do you hope to do at the end of your course?

Questions you might like to ask:

- How is the course assessed?:- continuous assessment, exam or a mixture of both?
- How is the course taught? – by lectures, seminars and/or tutorials?
- Are halls of residence available to first year students?

REMEMBER

- Interviews are two-way conversations. **YOU** need to make a contribution.
- Giving one-word answers will not do you any favours – waffling won't either.
- You may be asked to **JUSTIFY** why you have chosen a particular course
- Be prepared to talk about anything in your personal statement.

Interviews can last from 5 minutes to over an hour. It could be one person or a panel. You may also be invited to an “**OPEN DAY**” which may include an interview. This gives you a chance to look around and decide whether you would be happy there for the next 3 to 4 years.

GRANTS AWARDS & LOANS

WHAT IS A GRANT?

This is money paid by the Local Education Authority towards your living costs and the College's bill for your tuition fees. It is usually called an 'award.'

What kind of courses is eligible for a grant?

In general courses are eligible for grants and loans if:

- They are full-time courses, including sandwich courses, or, sometimes part-time courses of initial teacher training.
- They take place at a UK University or College of H.E.
- They lead to one of the following:
 - ◆ A first degree, such as a BA, BSc, MB, or Bed
 - ◆ A diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)
 - ◆ A Higher National Diploma (HND)
 - ◆ A Post Graduate Certificate in Education

During September 1997 the Government announced fundamental changes to the system of financing Higher Education. These changes take effect from the academic year 1998/99. Basically there are TWO main changes that affect students

- From September 1998 full-time students in higher education will have to pay some of the cost of tuition fees up to a maximum of £1,000.00 This will depend on their own income and that of their parents/guardians.
- The maintenance grant (covering living costs) will be reduced and from September 1999 will be replaced entirely by income related loans.

WHAT IS A LOAN?

As the term implies, this is money lent to you to help meet your living costs. Students may take out a loan which they repay later, when they have finished their course and are in employment.

The system of paying back loans will depend on your income once you have graduated. For many graduates monthly repayments will be smaller than under the old system. Graduates will also have longer to repay the loan if they need it.

WHEN SHOULD YOU APPLY?

The Local Education Authority (LEA) usually sends forms into College in January. They will be given to you immediately. You should complete the form and bring it back to College for the Principal to sign. The College will then send the form to the LEA.

Remember:

- ◆ If you live in **KENT** then you fill in the Kent County Council Forms.(usually by January)
- ◆ If you live in the Borough of **BEXLEY** then it's the London Borough of Bexley Forms
- ◆ If you live in the Borough of **BROMLEY** then it's the London Borough of Bromley Forms

Don't go by postcode. E.g. Erith has a Dartford Code but is the London Borough of Bexley. Swanley has a Bromley postcode but is in the County of Kent.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The LEA will ask you to fill in more forms. These are to help them to decide how much assistance you will get.

You will also have to fill in a form when a university has accepted you. This is usually in August, when your results are known.

HOW MUCH WILL I GET?

This will depend very much on your income. The amount also varies each year.

For more information you should read

“Investing in the future: Supporting Students in Higher Education”

This is a DfEE publication. It is available in College, or you can also obtain a copy by phoning the DfEE on:

Telephone Number -0800 731 9133

SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship is a way of receiving financial help during your degree or HND, often in exchange for periods of employment with a sponsor; this takes the form of a contract between you and the employer. Sponsorships are becoming much more difficult to obtain and there are no guarantees that one will be available to support your chosen course. But it's worth trying.

- There are different types of sponsorship
 - ◆ An annual salary during all or part of your studies.
 - ◆ A wage while working during the industrial part of a sandwich course.
 - ◆ Working for a sponsor for a year before your course and then being paid for further periods of training during it.

Some employers may not sponsor until the **second** year of the course.

You may be expected to join the company after your course and some insist you work for a period once you finish training. However sponsorship does **not** necessarily guarantee **YOU** a job.

- Courses that you could be sponsored for include:

Engineering - Pure and Applied Science - Business Studies – Accountancy - Economics and Computer Science.

Some sponsors will expect you attend a particular institution others are more flexible

ADVANTAGES

- Extra Money
- Potential work during the holidays
- Work Experience and training
- Gaining confidence in the working world
- The possibility of a job at the end of your studies

DISADVANTAGES

- Making an initial career decision at 17
- Ending up on a course you don't like
- Going to an institution not chosen by you.
- Not being free to take long summer holidays
- Being bound to a company for a period of time.

To find out more see:

‘Sponsorships’ COIC which details companies (over 200) giving financial assistance.
‘Which? Guide to sponsorships in Higher Education’

THE GAP YEAR

A “Gap” year or year off, as it is often called, is an attractive option for sixth formers wanting a break after the pressures of “A” Level or GNVQ’s.

There are many ways of spending a “Gap” year, some sensible and some not so. Many students find **work experience** in the area they want to develop their career in: others take “**working holidays**” at home or abroad; while more and more students are doing **voluntary work** to gain experience of working with less fortunate members of society.

ADVANTAGES OF A “GAP” YEAR

- **Self-reliance** – if you choose to live away from home, this can be an excellent preparation for college and working life.
- **Confidence & Maturity** – from getting out in the world and meeting lots of different people from different backgrounds.
- **Teamwork** – whether working for pay, volunteering or travelling with a small group, you will learn to work as part of a team and to make your own contribution.
- **Managing money and making plans** – deciding what to do with your year, working out a budget for travel, organizing our itinerary – all these develop useful skills for later life.
- **Thinking time** – away from college and exam pressures you have time to think about your future and be sure about your choices.
- **Course-related experience** – you might be able to do something that gives you an insight into your chosen subject.
- **Money to study** – earning money to help you through the course.

DISADVANTAGES OF A “GAP” YEAR

- **Time** – a “Gap” year adds to the length of higher education and training.
- **Continuity** – it is sometimes very difficult to get back to study. You May be ‘**Rusty**’
- **Distraction** – some students may become distracted from their goal of going to college, and may, of course, regret not going to university straight away.

n.b. Although many institutions encourage you to have a gap year, some may not! – Always check.

REPLIES & OFFERS

When your application form is sent to UCAS, you will also complete an ‘Acknowledgement Card’ which is sent with the form. UCAS will return this card to you, which simply confirms receipt of your application form. This will be followed by an ‘Acknowledgement Letter’, which means that your application form has been processed – reduced and sent to the universities of your choice. The letter will give you your **UCAS NUMBER** – keep this safely.

THEN THE WAITING BEGINS.

You will have to wait until the universities have considered your application. They then inform UCAS of their decision, you will then be told whether you have been **offered** a place, or if the university has **declined** your application.

OFFERS.

There are **two** types of offer:

- **Unconditional.** This is very unusual. It means they will accept you on the evidence they have received via your application form, or as a result of an interview. Usually you are only offered an unconditional place if you have already received your “A” level or GNVQ results, which meet the requirements of the University.
- **Conditional.** This is when an institution makes an offer that has to be met in order to have a place on a course; sometimes grades are specified.

Three grades C at “A” level or Distinction at GNVQ

Or a points offer is made (18 Points)

GRADE	“A” LEVEL	“A/S” LEVEL
A	10 Points	5 Points
B	8 Points	4 Points
C	6 Points	3 Points
D	4 Points	2 Points
E	2 Points	1 Points

When you receive the information from UCAS they will use the following codes to inform you of the decision made by the universities of your choice:

- ◆ **(R)** means you have been **refused** a place
- ◆ **(C)** means the offer is **conditional**
- ◆ **(U)** means the offer is **unconditional**

DECISION TIME.

After receiving notification from UCAS, you must now decide which TWO offers to accept. (If you do not receive any offers – see the Careers Teacher or Careers Consultant). There will be a date, on the ‘decisions letter, by which you must respond to UCAS with your acceptances. There are **three** possible dates.

YOU MUST REPLY BY THE DATE YOU ARE GIVEN. YOU MAY LOSE ALL OF YOUR PLACES IF YOU DO NOT DO SO.

- Try to visit all the universities that have offered you a place, in this way you can make an informed decision. If that is not possible, then check once again with the prospectus, read it carefully, or look it up on the ‘Push CD’.
 - ◆ Find out if it is a ‘Campus’ or ‘City University’?.
 - ◆ How many students does it have?
 - ◆ What does it tell you about accommodation?
 - ◆ What do you know about the course?
- Once you have decided where you would like to go, then you have to consider the following:
 - ◆ Will you get the grades which you are asked for?.
 - ◆ Which university would you prefer to go to?.
- You are now allowed to accept **TWO** offers.
 - ◆ The **First** is your **CONDITIONAL FIRM (CF)** acceptance.
 - ◆ The **Second** is your **CONDITIONAL INSURANCE (CI)** acceptance.
- This means that the FIRM acceptance is the one you would really like to go to. It is often the one with the highest grades. Your INSURANCE acceptance is your second choice and usually has a lower grade offer.
- It is important to realise that if you get the grades for your firm acceptance then you **MUST** go there. If you fail to reach those grades, but reach the grades for your insurance then you **MUST** go there. You have entered into a moral agreement. Like the universities cannot renege on their offer, you cannot renege on your decision.

If you need help in deciding – then ask

- If you receive no offers, **OR** fail to reach the conditions of the offers you hold, then you will **AUTOMATICALLY** go into **CLEARING**. This is a system whereby all universities with ‘spare’ places on courses publish their vacancies. You can then apply for one of these. This happens in August. You will be given advice, at that time, how to go about it.

CLEARING

Clearing is the process by which applicants without a place on a course can compete for one at an institution which still has vacancies. Clearing information will be available from mid to late August. Applicants in the UCAS scheme who are eligible for clearing (they have received 6 rejections) will automatically be sent a **CLEARING ENTRY FORM (CEF)**.

IMPORTANT DATES

Examination	Results announced
“A” Level	Thursday 19 th August 1999
GNVQ	End of July 1999
GCSE	Thursday 26 th August 1999

- So you have failed to get the necessary grades to get into university/college, what do you do?

TRY TO STAY CALM!!!

This will be a stressful time, but there will be lots of people willing to help you.

- Where can you find out about universities/colleges with vacancies, and what do you do?

On CEEFAX

On the INTERNET

In many of the NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS

At THE LEIGH CTC. The ECCTIS programme we have is linked to UCAS so has daily updates.

- 1) Find a suitable course at a university/college that you would like.
- 2) Research the course thoroughly (read the prospectus, use the PUSH CD). Now:-
- 3) Ring the admissions tutor at the university/college.
- 4) Be prepared to be interviewed over the phone, so try to be enthusiastic!!
- 5) If you can visit the university/college in the afternoon, or next day, do so.
- 6) If they are interested in you they will ask for your (CEF). Which you post to them **immediately**.
- 7) You can only send one at a time. So don't photocopy it.
- 8) The university/college can only make a formal offer once they have received your (CEF).
- 9) If they decide not to make an offer, they will return your (CEF).
- 10) Unfortunately its back to point (1)
- 11) **Don't give up**. Courses can come off-line and go back on again, daily.

Remember you can do **ALL** of points 1 - 4 at College without even leaving the **Careers Room**.

GOOD LUCK You will eventually get a place, but it may take several days.

HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

MAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students shown how to use ECCTIS – PUSH CD. ✓ Students encouraged to visit university “Open Days”.
JUNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Your Choice at Post 18 Conference. ✓ Complete practice UCAS form. ✓ Visit to Kent or Sussex University. ✓ Student Handbook distributed.
JULY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students research University Prospectuses. ✓ Students continue to visit universities. ✓ Students consult teachers to establish estimated grades.
SEPTEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students submit practice UCAS form to Head of Careers. ✓ Head of Careers photocopies UCAS form and distributes to Form Tutors and Head of Post 16 so that references can be started. ✓ Tutors complete reference pro-forma for the Head of Post 16. ✓ Students submit their personal statement to the Head of English. ✓ Students start to complete top copy of UCAS form.
OCTOBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students submit final top copy of their UCAS form to Head of Careers. ✓ Head of Post 16 submits references for typing to office. ✓ References added to top copy of UCAS form. <p style="text-align: center;">15th October last date for applications to “Oxbridge”</p>
NOVEMBER	<p>15th November is the College DEADLINE for application forms posted to UCAS.</p>
DECEMBER	<p style="text-align: center;">15th December is the LAST date for applications to reach UCAS.</p>
JANUARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Complete and send grant application forms to Kent LEA.
FEBRUARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Complete and send grant application forms to Bexley/Bromley LEA’s.
MARCH	<p>24th March is the LAST date for applications (Art Route B) to reach UCAS</p>
MAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Acceptance of firm (CF) and insurance (CI) forms to be sent to UCAS by the date designated by UCAS. You must reply by the date given to you
AUGUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Results published. ✓ Heads of Careers/Post 16 and Kent Careers Consultant available to offer advice. ✓ Acceptance forms sent to Universities/Colleges ✓ LEA’s notified of acceptances, so that grants can now be processed. ✓ Clearing starts for the few unsuccessful candidates.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE ENTRANCE for GUIDE 1999	Details of all university degree courses, HND courses, “A” Level requirements and competition for places, with brief descriptions of institutions.
THE COMPLETE DEGREE COURSE OFFERS 1999 By Brian Heap	Details of point requirements and offers for degrees and HND’s with advice to applicants
THE STUDENT BOOK By Nat West Bank	Summaries of degree subjects and details of many aspects of life at the various institutions.
HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR DEGREE COURSE By Brian Heap	Choosing courses by way of a careers group, careers and “A” Level subjects.
HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR HND COURSE By Brian Heap	Details of all HND Courses
GNVQ AND HIGHER EDUCATION (GATE)	Gives details of acceptability of GNVQ’s at each H.E. establishment.
DIRECTORY OF FURTHER EDUCATION	Lists all F.E. Courses and establishments.
DIRECTORY OF HIGHER EDUCATION	Lists all H.E. Courses and establishments.
DECISIONS AT 17/18	Considers a variety of possibilities after “A” Levels or GNVQ’s.
A YEAR ON – A YEAR OFF	A guide to jobs, voluntary service and working holidays, during your education.
GO FOR IT By Martyn Lewis	The essential guide to opportunities for young people.
ECCTIS	A computer programme for initial sifting of possible courses.
PUSH CD	A computer programme and book which investigates various aspects of life at university including details of cities/towns/campuses/social life. Etc....
THE POTTER GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY (ECCTIS)	A computer programme and book which allows you to look for universities by type of campus, location or age.
DISCOURSE (ISCO & DISCOURSE)	An interactive computer programme linked to ECCTIS, which asks you a lot of questions and then suggests possible degree courses.
CENTIGRADE (UCAS)	Similar to Discourse but a facility offered by UCAS itself. Costs £10.00.
HOW TO COMPLETE YOUR UCAS FORM	A video showing important aspects of completing the form.