Guiding University Choice

Session Four: Pulling it together

Reading

Entry Qualifications

You will all be aware that one of the prime requisites of entry onto a university degree course is academic attainment. Whatever type of Level 3 you are studying, whether it's A Levels, a BTEC course or the International Baccalaureate each university will state certain grades from examinations that it expects candidates to meet.

You will also be aware that entry grades vary a great deal from university to university and in some cases from course to course. Therefore it is essential to get a clear idea of where you fit in with this given your progress in your current course. In general terms the more traditional academic universities (those in the Russell Group and other traditional universities) tend to ask for higher grades than some of the 'newer' university sector. However this is not always the case and some popular courses at newer universities can also demand higher grades from final exams...so check things out.

'UCAS points' is a phrase you will hear quite a lot. If you are not sure what they are visit the UCAS website (www.ucas.com) and go to the 'Tariff Tables'. Here you will find information on how the system works. However not all universities use the UCAS points system when advertising entry requirements. Some will state particular grades that are needed plus particular subjects (e.g. a certain pass at A/B might be needed in Biology to study a Biological science degree in many universities).

So apart from certain grades from your Level 3 qualifications here are some of the other entry requirements you might come across:

- **GCSE grades** – most courses will expect Grade C or 4/5 from the new GCSEs in Maths and English. However, you will find that some courses ask for specific grades from certain GCSE subjects, particularly in science-based subjects at popular universities.
- **Entrance tests** – if you are thinking of studying Medicine this is a must. Some Law courses will also ask you sit an entrance test. Cambridge and Oxford Universities require you to sit an entrance test as part of their application procedure. Various other universities use entrance tests as part of their recruitment process for degrees associated with Health (such as Midwifery, Nursing, Radiology) and subjects such as Journalism and Social Work.
- **Interviews** – in general there are far fewer admissions interviews nowadays. If you are thinking of following a degree that will lead into a career working with people (for example,

Health and Medical-based degrees, Social Work, Teaching) expect an interview. Some universities will still interview for popular competitive courses and others employ a 'selective interview' approach. In these situations if you get invited to an interview don't panic! It's a good indication that the university is interested in you.

- **Work experience** – although it may not be stated as a formal entry requirement many courses you will research will 'suggest' this is a good idea. Various vocational degrees (Engineering, Business and Finance, Computer Science-related) will have an expectation that you understand the industry you are likely to enter after your studies. Again for competitive courses like Law and Medicine it's a must!
- **Portfolios** – if you are thinking of following a degree in the creative arts or a design related degree then admissions staff will want you to illustrate your ability. A good portfolio showcasing your work will be crucial.
- **Auditions** – similarly in the Performing Arts area you will need to show your ability whether it's Acting, Dance or Music. It's worth noting that some music performance degrees will ask for particular grades in musical ability.

UCAS Personal Statement

As you can see it's not all about grades or UCAS points! The other important part of the application process is explaining to the university why you are interested in studying the subject. This brings us to the importance of the UCAS Personal Statement which will be the vehicle for you to get this message across to admissions staff who make decisions on entry to courses. They will be asking themselves a very basic question when they receive your application: ***Why should we give you a place on our course?***

Getting started on the UCAS Personal Statement is never easy. However, like any piece of informative written work, having a plan to guide you will help the process and make the contents relevant. You might like to consider the framework below as an approach to writing your personal statement.

25%	**ACADEMIC – INTRODUCTION** Reasons for selecting subject/degree - What was your personal trigger?
50%	**ACADEMIC – INTEREST** Provide evidence of interest in the subject – what have you done to build that interest? Relevant work experience
20%	**GENERAL INTERESTS/ACHIEVEMENTS** Extra-Curricular Activities – Personal Achievements- Travel- Paid Employment -Voluntary Work What skills have you developed – what have you learned – links to subject choice
5%	**SUMMARY** What do you hope to gain from university?

When thinking of the contents of your Personal Statement, start collating information you could include to support an application for the subject/course that interests you:

- What interests you about the subject/course you want to study?
- What have you done to increase your knowledge of the subject/course?
- What work experience have you done? Does it link in with your subject/course choice?
- What are your future career plans? How do they link with your subject/course choice?
- Does the subject/course you are interested in ask for any particular skills? How could you illustrate this?
- What are your interests and hobbies? Do they fit into the subject/course you want to study?
- Have you been involved in volunteering or other extra-curricular activities? What did you gain from these?

Further information on entry requirements

Which University – http://university.which.co.uk/advice/ucas-application/the-real-story-behind-entry-requirements

Russell Group – http://russellgroup.ac.uk/media/5320/informedchoices.pdf

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