

# A GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY STUDENT WORKBOOK



The Checkland Building



University of Brighton

COMPACT

# WELCOME

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If you are considering university we understand that there is a lot to think about. We are here to make sure that you get the information and experiences to help you make an informed decision about the right subject, course and university for you.

Through our Compact Plus programme we have a range of activities from taster days to residential summer schools. We hope that these activities and this workbook will help you to develop your ideas about the best university options for you.

We will enjoy working with you and hope you enjoy working with us.

Best wishes

**The Compact team**  
University of Brighton



Carl Griffiths, Compact Liaison Officer and Cat Walsh, Compact Plus Coordinator

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# MY UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

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Use the space below to make notes about your first impressions of university and what you felt about your experience. Recording this information here will give you something to refer to when you are completing your UCAS form.

**1. Which activity did you take part in?**

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**2. Which university campus did you visit?**

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**3. What were the dates of your activity?**

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**4. People you have met and their jobs**

Have you met any student ambassadors, lecturers, support staff?

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**5. What surprised you?**

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**6. What do you want to know more about?**

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# ACTIVITY DIARY

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Use this space to make a note of all the activities you take part in.

## 7. What did you do?

This could be... attended a lecture | took part in a seminar | visited a halls of residence | did a group activity | went to a workshop | or something else.

What did you do?

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What did you learn about university?

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# EXPLORING YOUR OPTIONS

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Take the time to make sure you choose a subject, course and university that all complement your strengths and attributes. Consider all your options, as studying at university opens up a much wider range of subjects to choose from. Make sure that you find out all the information you need, particularly if you are looking at a subject that you are not familiar with.

## 9. Choosing the right subject and course

Family, friends, teachers and careers advisers can all be good sources of information but what appeals to others may not be right for you. Ultimately, the decision is yours.

Which subject options would you like to explore?

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✔ Once you have made a shortlist of your options, ask yourself the questions below to help you to reach a decision.

## 10. What do you like about these subjects?

If you want to get the most out of your time at university you should be prepared to work hard. It's easier to motivate yourself when the pressure is on if you have a real commitment to the subject and you'll be more likely to graduate with a better degree at the end.

Which subjects do you enjoy?

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## 11. Would you like to study more than one subject?

It is possible to study more than one subject as a combined degree such as English and media?

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## 12. What career(s) could this subject lead to?

Look at university websites and prospectuses to get an idea of what careers your university course could lead to. You could ask people from different industries what degrees they studied.

What career options appeal to you?

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### 13. Choosing the right university

Once you have a subject in mind, you need to shortlist which universities to apply for. Think about:

- Is the course classroom-based or more practical and does this suit how you like to be taught?
- Are the entry requirements achievable?
- How is the course assessed? Is it exam-based, essays, presentations or group work?  
Which do you prefer?
- Where would you like to study?  
E.g. near your home town or wherever the best course for you is offered?
- Why do you want to study there? E.g. to be close to home or to experience a new place.

What do you think these places will be like to live in?

- The cost of living may vary from place to place
- Living at home may be cheaper
- Do you like universities with one single campus or multiple sites?
- What will the cost of travelling home or to your campus be?
- Does the city/town you would like to study in provide social activities that you enjoy like sports, music and arts?

Where would you live and study? Think about the questions above and list the pros and cons of the places below.

Pros	Cons
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**TOP TIP** Don't be shy. If you need more information at any stage, you can also contact any university directly to ask questions.

# MY NEXT STEPS

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Here is your checklist of things to think about in Year 12 and 13 to help prepare you for university. The timeline on the next page shows you when to do each one.

## Year 12:

- ✔ Search for courses and universities on UCAS
- ✔ Choose between 6-10 of interest
- ✔ Visit university websites to research course content and ways of learning in detail
- ✔ Check entry requirements
- ✔ Order prospectuses
- ✔ Visit open days: talk to students and staff
- ✔ Talk to careers advisers, teachers, family and people from the industry about your shortlist

### Help your application by:

Contacting your shortlisted universities with any questions you have and getting relevant experience to help your application by –

- Doing voluntary work
- Taking part in activities outside school
- Researching the subject

All these things can contribute to a strong application and personal statement

## Year 13:

- ✔ Decide on your UCAS shortlist – you can apply for up to 5
- ✔ Prepare your personal statement
- ✔ Make your UCAS application
- ✔ Attend interviews and applicant days
- ✔ Consider which offers to accept
- ✔ Research accommodation options
- ✔ Apply for funding
- ✔ Confirm your university choice
- ✔ Get your exam results
- ✔ Enrol and start your exciting new future

# Good luck!



START HERE



**YEAR 12**

**YEAR 13**

MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	
			<b>OPEN DAYS</b>				<b>OPEN DAYS</b>												
			<p>This timeline provides you with general advice about what you need to do and by when as you go through the process of applying and starting university.</p>																
			<p>Make sure you confirm the full details of deadlines and processes that relate to your application by checking university websites and those of UCAS and the relevant student funding body, eg Student Finance England.</p>																
			<p><b>BEGIN YOUR RESEARCH</b>  Shortlist universities that offer the subjects you are interested in. Order prospectuses and check entry requirements.</p>																
			<p>Visit UCAS and HE fairs or attend events at your school or college.</p>																
			<p>Book open day visits in advance. Talk to careers advisors, teachers, family, friends and people from the industry about your shortlist.</p>																
			<p><b>START DRAFTING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT</b>  Start drafting your personal statement.</p>																
			<p>Having a draft copy you can amend later is better than looking at blank page. If you have any concerns contact the admissions department of your chosen universities.</p>																
			<p><b>YOUR APPLICATION</b>  UCAS application opens in mid-September. The main UCAS deadline is in mid-January but your school or college may require you to submit your application to them before then.</p>																
			<p>Contact universities with any questions. Decide on your shortlist and prepare your personal statement.</p>																
			<p><b>INTERVIEWS AND APPLICANT DAYS</b>  You may be invited to visit a university for an interview or applicant day from the autumn term onwards.</p>																
			<p>This will give you further opportunities to get a feel for the university, meet students and staff from the course you have applied to and see the facilities you will be using every day.</p>																
			<p>Interviews usually take place between November and March.</p>																
			<p><b>OFFERS AND INTERVIEWS</b>  Offers can be made from September but usually in the spring term.</p>																
			<p><b>UCAS EXTRA</b>  New applicants and applicants who are not holding offers are given a chance to apply to courses that still have vacancies.</p>																
			<p><b>APPLYING FOR FUNDING</b>  You needn't wait for offers to apply for funding. Apply as early as possible.  Visit <a href="http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance">www.gov.uk/studentfinance</a></p>																
			<p><b>CONFIRM YOUR CHOICES</b>  Consider your options and confirm your firm and insurance choice. If you applied before the January deadline, you must confirm your choices with UCAS by early May. If you applied later you will need to confirm in June.</p>																
			<p><b>EXAM RESULTS</b>  BTEC and IB results may be available in July. A-level results are published in August.</p>																
			<p>Confirm your place with UCAS Track. If you don't do as well as you'd hoped you may still be able to find a place on a course through UCAS Clearing.</p>																
			<p><b>ACCOMMODATION CHOICES</b>  Research your options and think about which type of accommodation is right for you.</p>																
			<p><b>FINALISING ACCOMMODATION</b>  Make sure you meet any deadlines you are given if you are offered a place in halls. Make use of support offered by university accommodation services if you are looking for other types of accommodation.</p>																
			<p><b>ENROL ONLINE</b>  Your university will send you details of how and when to enrol on your course. Part of this process may be completed online before you arrive on campus.</p>																
			<p><b>STARTING UNI</b>  Enrol in person and join in course induction and events for new students.</p>																

# TIMELINE

# APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY

In Year 13 from mid-September onwards you can apply to university through UCAS. The majority of people do so by the main deadline in mid-January but you can apply all year.

The UCAS application process is explained in detail on their website. For more information you can visit here:

[www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/undergraduate](http://www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/undergraduate)

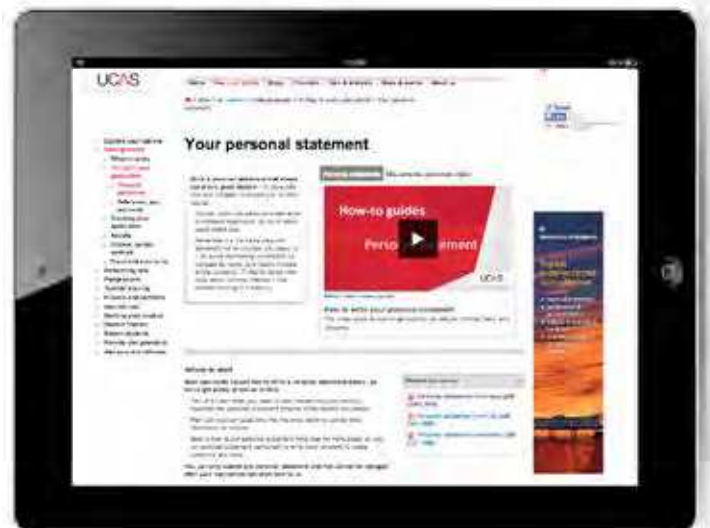
You should also read the advice about application, admissions and entry requirements on your chosen universities' websites.

## Applying through UCAS:

Remember entry requirements may vary from course to course and some will want you to have certain qualifications such as subject-specific GCSEs.

Other selection criteria may include:

- Work experience (paid or voluntary)
- Interview/audition/portfolio inspection (mainly for art courses)
- Foundation diploma in art (this is a 1 year course you would take after Year 13)
- A great personal statement – see pages 12-13 for help
- Additional testing of literacy and numeracy may be required
- Meeting health, residency and criminal conviction requirements.



# ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AND ADMISSIONS

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Universities are all different and each one has its own admissions policy and entry requirements.

You can read about flexible admissions policy offered by the University of Brighton below.



Our prospectus and coursefinder should be used as a general guide to our entry requirements. Different applicants may be made higher or lower offers for the same course.

Your examination grades are very important to us. We use them when deciding who to make offers to, but other things count too. Our admissions tutors look at lots of factors to make sure that everyone is given an equal opportunity to show their achievements.

If we feel you have exactly the right qualities and commitment to excel with us and to become a valued member of our university community we will be keen to offer you a place and may make you a lower offer than the standard entry requirements.

We understand that your achievement may be affected by educational and personal circumstances, which may include being from a disadvantaged area or having a family background which is disadvantaged in terms of income or education, or no previous experience of university.

Our admissions tutors will consider this when assessing your academic potential and how you would benefit from studying your chosen course. What this means for your application will depend on the course you are applying for – as different courses have different requirements – but it could mean that you are made an offer which is lower than the published standard entry requirements or invited to interview. A lower offer might mean that where the course normally requires BBB, we might make you an offer of BBC.”

## TOP TIP

You should check the details on the university’s website before you apply. Understanding more about the policy at your chosen university could help you to make the right decision for you and a strong application.

# YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

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Look back at the notes you've already made in sections 1-13. These will help you draft your personal statement.

Start drafting it early, maybe during the summer break between Year 12 and Year 13. It's better to have a draft you change later than a blank page and a looming deadline.

**Don't panic** – remember everyone (not just you) takes at least four drafts before they're happy with it.

## Writing about the course

- Why are you applying for your chosen course(s)?
- Why does this subject interest you? Talk about your understanding of the course and subject.
- Why are you suitable? Do you have any skills and experiences that will help you succeed?
- Do your current or previous studies relate to the course?
- Have you taken part in any other activities that demonstrate your interest in the course?

## Work experience

Include details of any paid or unpaid jobs – this could be placements or voluntary work. Again try to link this to any skills or qualities related to the course.

## Skills and achievements

Talk about any achievements in or out of school and any responsibilities you have been given that you are proud of. Mention skills or experiences that give a sense of you as an individual that demonstrate your suitability for your course and life at university. Don't forget to say that you have taken part in an activity at the University of Brighton.

## Hobbies and interests

Make a list of your hobbies, interests and social activities – try to link them to the skills and experience required for the course and how they show your personality and abilities.

## Future plans

If you have any ideas or ambitions about what you would like to achieve after you graduate, explain how the course will relate to that and support you to achieve this.

## Tip: When you use examples try to answer these questions:

- What did you do?
- What did you learn?
- How will this help you to succeed at university or in your future career?

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**14. Writing about the course**

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**15. Work experience**

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**16. Skills and achievements**

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**17. Hobbies and interests**

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**18. Future plans**

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# TOP TIPS

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## Dos and don'ts

- ✔ Draft your statement on a computer as a document and make sure you save it as you go along
- ✔ Do make sure you check your grammar and spelling. Make use of spell check and print a copy too as this is a good way to spot mistakes. Then cut and paste into the online application when you are ready
- ✔ Remember that your finished personal statement can be up to 4,000 characters or 47 lines of text (including spaces and blank lines). Word may count the characters slightly differently to the online UCAS form, so it is a good idea to allow plenty of time to make any last minute adjustments
- ✔ Save it regularly because the online UCAS form will time out after 35 minutes of inactivity
- ✔ Do show your strengths and explain everything clearly
- ✔ Do show your enthusiasm for the course
- ✔ Do produce several drafts and make sure you are completely happy
- ✔ Do ask people to proofread and give you advice on your writing
- ✔ Do visit [www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/undergraduate/filling-your-application/your-personal-statement](http://www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/undergraduate/filling-your-application/your-personal-statement) for more tips and information
- ✘ Don't exaggerate the truth or give any false information – you may get caught out!
- ✘ Don't leave it until the last minute
- ✘ Don't copy from the web or others – you will be checked for plagiarism

## TIP

If you attend an interview or applicant day at a university make sure you reread your personal statement, you could be asked questions on it.





If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact the University of Brighton Compact team on the details below or visit our website:

E: [compactplus@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:compactplus@brighton.ac.uk)

T: 01273 641043

[www.brighton.ac.uk/compact](http://www.brighton.ac.uk/compact)



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