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VI Book 2 and university applications

Dear Parents,

As we approach the end of the academic year and with exams drawn to a close the university entrance process for your sons gathers pace. I write to outline the key dates and information for the term ahead.

This letter focusses on UK applications: those applying to the US and internationally have had separate information from Mr Winter, Head of Careers & International Universities.

More information about each of the stages of the UK application process follows below; I hope it will be helpful in allowing you to assist your sons in their decision-making over the coming months.

[A recording of February's Higher Education Evening can be found here](#) in case you wish to revisit it (you will need to use a Winchester College address to access it); and a timeline of what is to come this term and next follows as well.

We do encourage the boys to discuss their decisions with you, as well as with their Housemasters, subject teachers and academic mentor – and both Matt Winter and I are available to field any questions you might have about the process. Please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Quayle

Director of Sixth Book Progression

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Applying to UK universities

In the UK, boys submit an application to university via **UCAS**.

Boys may apply for up to five choices; these choices are 'blind', in that no university sees where else an applicant has applied. This year's UCAS 'buzzword' – required to link boys to Winchester College – is WinColl2022. All boys in Vi Book 2 have had information about how to fill out their UCAS form, and their housemasters will check they are keeping to the school's deadlines.

A fuller outline of the process follows.

Researching courses and options

Most boys will find that their first port of call is a conversation with their subject teachers, Heads of Department, and/or academic mentor, as well as their Housemaster. Boys can use **UCAS** to search for courses and research required grades; we also use **BridgeU**, which has useful comparison tools, to encourage boys to think about possible courses and destinations. League tables can be a helpful indicator, but should be treated with caution. Likewise Oxbridge admissions statistics and agonising over college choices, which often come at the exclusion of actual preparation and wider reading. There are also opportunities to talk to OWs and the wider OW network about their university experiences.

Choosing courses and destinations

Boys should be encouraged to be **realistic** about where they apply to and what they apply for: are they genuinely interested in the subject, or just the 'brand name' of the university? Can they evidence that interest already – in work produced, in what they do in their free time, in conversation? Are they likely to achieve the required grades, especially for the most competitive courses? Have they evidenced that at GCSE, and/or in strong predictions? Does the teaching style of that university suit them? Are the modules interesting? These are the sorts of questions we encourage boys to ask of themselves and their choices.

We encourage boys to research and eventually select a range of grade requirements – some at the upper end of what they are likely to achieve, some 'insurance' choices – and to look at a wide range of universities.

The UCAS form

There are three notable parts of the UCAS application form: the personal statement; and the school reference and predicted grades.

Personal statements

The personal statement is effectively an application letter outlining why the applicant is interested in studying the subject and focusing on where their academic interests lie within their chosen discipline. It is limited to 47 lines or 4000 characters, so boys need to outline what is it that has engaged them within the subject and how they've pursued those angles of research with concision and clarity.



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We ask boys to produce two good drafts of their statement: one before the end of Cloister Time, which is reviewed by their Div don and academic mentor, and one at the end of the summer holidays. There should be a material difference between the two: the summer is a vital time to enrich and extend a university application, and we ask the boys to go away with a reading/preparation list to ensure time is well-spent.

A final draft statement is required by 5th September in order that there is time for boys to review and finalise their statement ahead of the UCAS submission deadlines.

School references

References are written by your son's Housemaster, with content provided by their subject teachers. The focus is academic, highlighting what they have achieved across their A-level studies, picking out any particularly exemplary pieces of work, and showcasing the qualities that make them a good fit for the subject at university level.

There is also the chance to contextualise any achievements or difficulties, and Housemasters will offer a picture of the applicant that develops and complements what is found in the rest of the UCAS form. All teachers receive training and updates in reference writing and references are reviewed by Heads of Department and by a reference checking panel to ensure that they are granular, sympathetic and highly personal. These school references are then sent as part of the final UCAS application.

Predicted grades

The short turnaround from VI:2 exams last week means that finalised predicted grades will not be available tomorrow at Parents' Evening 4 (PE4). Subject teachers will obviously be able to discuss your son's performance in the summer exam, his wider progress and what he can do to improve over the holiday.

Initial predicted grades will be issued to boys at the end of this term within his end-of-term report. They will be arrived at holistically, and will consider all of the other evidence gathered throughout the year.

Predicted grades will be finalised in September. Boys who are disappointed with their initial prediction(s) will have the opportunity to have it revised if they produce an improved exam performance upon their return to school in September. Departments will outline for boys the content and supporting materials needed to prepare for these optional 'Collections' exams before the end of the summer term. VI Book 1 will be returning to school on Thursday 2nd September, 'Collections' will take place over the course of the following two days alongside a programme of UCAS preparation. The Director of Studies will talk to this briefly at the start of PE4.



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The university application process – a timeline

Cloister Time	Activity/ description
Fri 25 th June, 2000, MS Teams	Personal statement writing workshop <i>An introduction to the personal statement: what it is, how to construct one, common pitfalls and excellent examples.</i>
Saturday 26 th June	Div task – personal statement drafting <i>Your sons will be asked to prepare a first draft of their personal statement for review up to the preliminary draft deadline.</i>
Monday 28 th June, 1930, MS Teams	Gap years and university travel <i>A talk with external speakers outlining how to make the most of any time off – whether gap year, university holidays, after university or career breaks – and how to construct a gap year with purpose.</i>
Monday 28 th – Thursday 1 st July	Reviewing of personal statements with Div dons and mentors <i>Both Div dons and academic mentors (who have been allocated to your sons) will review draft statements, making suggestions on content and style and planning out further reading and preparation to take place over the summer.</i>
Thursday 1 st July	Personal statement preliminary draft deadline
Saturday 3 rd July	Initial predicted grades issued
Summer holidays	
July/August	Preparation for application: Reading, summer courses, work experience, university open days/visits <i>The summer is a vital time to enrich and extend a university application, and applicants should be aiming to develop expertise and depth in a few areas within their discipline through wider reading, additional courses and/or work experience where relevant.</i> <i>Attending online and in-person open days can be helpful in the decision-making process: look on UCAS and individual university websites for these.</i>



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	<p>Admissions tests: UCAT and LNAT <i>These tests are required for some Medicine courses (UCAT) and some Law courses (LNAT). They are registered for by the candidate (rather than the school) and sat independently.</i></p>
Short Half 2021	
3 rd September	<p>UCAS day for Vi Book 1 <i>Boys in top year have time ahead of the start of the term to refine and edit their personal statement, to have mock interviews and to finalise their course choices.</i></p>
4 th /5 th September	<p>Collections <i>Exams offered to those who have not achieved their desired predicted grades or who have underperformed in Cloister Time exams – notification given in Cloister Time end-of-term reports.</i></p>
5th September	<p>Final draft personal statement deadline <i>Final draft personal statements due; these are reviewed by academic mentors and Housemasters before being entered onto UCAS.</i></p>
30 th September	<p>Deadline for Oxbridge and medic UCAS forms to be submitted (including VetMed and Dentistry)</p>
15 th October	<p>Closing date for registration for pre-admissions tests and for submission of written work to Oxbridge <i>Some courses – both Oxbridge and non-Oxbridge – will require applicants to sit admissions tests. The most common of these are the BMAT (for Medicine, various universities) and the TSA (various courses, Oxford and Cambridge). Candidates should check their university/course options carefully and register with the Careers team.</i></p> <p><i>Some courses also require written work – this submission takes place outside of UCAS and candidates should check their university/course requirements carefully and ensure they have suitable written work to submit.</i></p>



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20 th October	<p>Final deadline for all UCAS forms <i>All boys in Vi Book 1 are required to submit their UCAS form by 20th October.</i></p>
Leave-out	
3 rd November	<p>University admissions tests <i>These tests are held in school, with entries registered and venues organised by the Careers team and Exams Office. Test preparation classes take place throughout the term in the lead up to these tests.</i></p>
December	University interviews
Common Time	
January - May	Boys receive offers from universities
Cloister Time	
May - June	Boys reply to offers , selecting a firm and insurance choice