

From the desk of the UCAS Coordinator: University requirements in the UK

Starting in S5: Choosing your options for S6 and S7.

When you are in S5 it is difficult to know what you want to do at university and beyond, but here are some guidelines for making your choices:

- Think first about careers you might be interested in, not just courses you enjoy.
- Choose subjects you find interesting, but consider also how you are coping with them in S5. They get more difficult in S6!
- Look online at what subjects and grades universities require for courses you think you might want to apply for. Note that the requirements they quote are the *minimum* requirements, and often universities ask for higher grades than are quoted on their website.
- Since our science courses are limited to 4 periods a week, the lab courses are an essential supplement for those going on in science.
- Subjects studied in L2 are not fully comparable with the same subject for UK A levels. If you are considering applying to study one of these, you are advised to get an A level book in the subject and read it!
- It is often possible to take more than one subject for your degree. For example, Biology with Criminology, History with French, or Economics and Politics. In such cases you should ensure you have the right combination of options.
- Some subjects taught at university are not offered in schools. These include Psychology, Law, Engineering, Economics, Politics, Sociology, Philosophy and Geology. In such cases, choose relevant courses, but read a book on these subjects to be sure you understand what they are about. You will need to demonstrate that you understand the nature of the course you are applying for.
- Medicine and Veterinary Medicine are extremely hard to get into. You should normally take all 3 sciences, Maths 5 and a lab course. If you feel this is too much for you, you should consider whether you are right for such a long, intense course and high-stress career. Your choice of options at school will send a message to the Admissions Tutor as to your suitability for the course. It is possible to apply without Physics, but you must be realistic, and have a back-up plan. If your back-up plan is to study medicine in another country such as Belgium, you will need Physics, so you are best advised to take it anyway!
- Don't be influenced by what your friends are choosing, or which teachers you like best – they can change!
- If things do not go well in S6, you have some flexibility at the end of the year. So long as you still have 31 periods and two 4-period options, you can
 - drop an optional class,
 - change from History 4 to History 2, or History 2 to History 4, (following an exam - if you are good enough). The same is true for Geography and Philosophy.
 - change from Maths 5 to Maths 3
 - You cannot add any other class.
- In your Baccalaureate at the end of S7, you only take a final exam in two 4-period options. So if you take 3 options, you have some flexibility.

The following is **only a guide!** Different Universities have different requirements, so check the websites.

University subject applied for	Essential subjects at school	Highly desirable subjects	Possible supporting subjects and other studies
Art	Art + a portfolio	Digital Art if interest is in this area	You can apply for a foundation course
Music	Music and Grade 8 or equivalent in an instrument		Entry will be subject to an audition
Drama, Theatre	Advanced English	LAMDA Grade 8 or equivalent	Entry will be subject to an audition
Architecture	Art, a portfolio, Maths 5	Physics, Digital Art	Knowledge of computer aided design (CAD)
Law	A strong profile in humanities	Advanced English, History, Maths 5	
Computer Science	Maths 5	Advanced Maths Good knowledge of programming	We don't have a full computer science course, so teach yourself programming!
Economics, Econometrics	Maths 5, Economics	Advanced Maths	
Business or Management	None	Economics.	Maths 5 is not essential, but you should have a good grade in Maths 3
English Literature	Advanced English		Read very widely
Journalism	A strong profile in humanities	Advanced English, History, Geography	Enter writing competitions if possible
Medicine	Biology 4, Chemistry, Chemistry or Biology Lab, Maths 5 or Physics	Physics is strongly advised. Essential if your back-up plan is studying medicine in the EU	At least 4 weeks experience in a caring profession essential – preferably something regular throughout the 2 years
Biomedical Sciences, Dentistry	Biology 4, Chemistry, Chemistry or Biology Lab, Maths 5	Physics	
Veterinary Medicine	Biology 4, Chemistry, Chemistry or Biology Lab, Maths 5 or Physics	Physics is strongly advised. Essential if your back-up plan is studying veterinary medicine in the EU	At least 4 weeks experience with animals essential – preferably something regular throughout the 2 years
Nursing	Biology 4, Chemistry, Chemistry or Biology Lab	Maths 5	Experience working in a caring profession
Engineering (except Chemical)	Physics, Physics Lab, Maths 5	Advanced Maths	Knowledge of computer programming
Chemical Engineering	Chemistry, Physics, Chemistry Lab, Maths 5	Advanced Maths	Knowledge of computer programming

Physics	Physics, Physics Lab, Maths 5	Advanced Maths	Knowledge of computer programming
Chemistry, Biochemistry	Chemistry, Chemistry Lab, Maths 5	Physics	
Biology and Biological Sciences, Ecology	Biology 4, Chemistry, Biology Lab or Chemistry Lab	Maths 5	
History, Archaeology	History 4	Advanced English	Read an A level History book to reinforce History in English
Geography	Geography 4	Maths 5	Read an A level Geography book to reinforce English
Psychology (note that <i>clinical</i> psychology requires a medical degree first)	Biology 4, Chemistry	Maths 5	
Education	None	Maths 5, Advanced English	
Languages	Languages! But not necessarily the one(s) you want to study, especially if they are things like Chinese or Arabic.	Advanced L2	
Politics	None	History 4, Advanced English	
Philosophy	None	Philosophy 4; Advanced English	
Sports Science	Biology		A strong sports record

Applying to UK University

Cost

If you have a UK passport, you will be considered a 'home' student for fees purposes. The fees will be approximately 9,300 GBP per year for all courses. You may also have access to a student loan for your fees. This is valid for courses starting at the latest October 2027. Note that some Scottish universities have found a loophole in Scottish legislation, and do not accept UK nationals born outside the UK as 'home' students.

All other students are considered 'International' for fees purposes. Fees vary from 9000 up to 40,000GBP per year, depending on the university and the course. This does not include accommodation. No UK government loans are available. There are a few scholarships, but not normally for large amounts.

It is important that you have a conversation with your parents before you consider an application to the UK. If you have a parent who is employed at the Commission or similar, they may be eligible for 'Education Allowance', which when added to Child Allowance comes to almost 12,000 euros a year.

How to apply

Your European Baccalaureate is broad-based and well accepted as a general entry requirement for university in the UK and all across Europe. However, in the UK entry is highly competitive.

The application process begins in May of S6, and is done entirely online through UCAS. Applications for Oxford, Cambridge and all medical degrees must be complete by October 1st of your S7 year, and all other applications by November 15th. These are internal deadlines, designed to ensure we can get your application finalised and to UCAS in good time to meet their deadlines.

Selection is based on

- **S6 grades** and **predicted grades** at the Bac (normally based on S6 grades)
- The **reference** written by the UCAS coordinator with input from all subject teachers
- The **personal statement** of the student
- **Interview** – usually only medical courses. Oxford and Cambridge also interview for most courses.
- In some cases **pre-interview tests** must be taken. This is true for
 - All medical degrees, including veterinary medicine and dentistry
 - Most courses at Oxford and Cambridge
 - Some courses at other highly selective universities

Admissions tutors from the top universities report that **the first thing they look at is the S6 grades** and predicted Bac grades. If these fall below the required level the application is rejected at the first stage.

If a university offers you a place, it will normally be conditional on the following:

- An overall grade in the Bac
- Specific grade(s) in the subject area you wish to study
- Proof of level of English. Some universities accept L2 English for some courses, but not all. Otherwise you will need to take IELTS, Cambridge Advanced or Cambridge Proficiency tests.

Oxford and Cambridge

To make a serious application to Oxford or Cambridge you should

- Have an average of a 9.0 in your S6 **exams**, with at least 9.0 in relevant subjects
- Check if an entrance exam is required, and start to prepare for it in S6. Get a book specifically in preparation for the exam, and do past papers to time. You do not have a chance if you do not prepare thoroughly!
- Read widely round the subject you want to study, and look for opportunities to expand your knowledge and experience through competitions, voluntary experience and participation in events inside and outside school. This is known as ‘super-curricular’ work – something your classroom teacher has not required of you.
- Extra-curricular activities are also important, especially if they involve leadership and mentoring, but are less significant than ‘super-curricular’ unless they relate directly to your chosen course.

Be aware that **many excellent students do not get accepted!**

Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

There are quotas for these subjects, and it is extremely difficult to get a place. To have a reasonable chance you should

- Show you can cope with a heavy academic load, and are strong in sciences – usually an 8.5 or above in your science subjects and Maths is required
- Prepare for the UCAT or BMAT exams early. The UCAT can be taken at the end of S6 or in September of S7. The BMAT is taken in October or November of S7, and is subject-specific, requiring thorough knowledge of all 3 sciences to GCSE level. You do not have this from S4 and S5. Check which exam is required by which universities. Get a book specifically in preparation for the exam, and do past papers to time. You do not have a chance if you do not prepare thoroughly!

- Do some voluntary work in a setting where you are in the role of carer. Examples include working in a retirement home, a children’s home, with refugees, with disabled people, or with the Red Cross.
- It is not essential to have experience working in a hospital or with a doctor, though this is valuable for you to be sure you really want to follow this profession!
- Check the age requirement if you will be under 18 on September 1st of the year you want to start.
- Show a lot of maturity and responsibility through the activities and actions you have taken

Grades

Within each university, grades asked for vary depending on the course, with the most competitive courses requiring the highest grades. The table below is **only a rough guide**. It is not official.

Typical Bac and S6 grades required:

Oxford & Cambridge, medical courses, highly competitive courses in other top universities:	8.5-9.0 overall with 9.0 in specified relevant subject(s)
‘Russell Group’ and other top Universities (e.g. Edinburgh, Manchester, Durham, Birmingham, Bristol, Southampton, most London colleges...):	8.5 overall with 8.5-9.0 in specified relevant subject(s)
Other good universities (e.g. Sussex, Kent, Keele, Loughborough ...):	7.5 – 8.5 overall with 7.5 – 8.5 in specified relevant subject(s)
Other universities, often with excellent courses in specialised subject areas:	7.0 – 7.5 overall with 7.0 – 7.5 in specified relevant subject(s)

A student with an average below 7.0 in S6 will have difficulty getting a place, except in specialist areas like Music, Art and Theatre, where other qualifications and skills are more important.

How your Baccalaureate is calculated

Calculation of your final Baccalaureate grade is complicated, but the following is an approximate guide. Only grades obtained in S7 count. Your Bac is composed of:

- The pre-bac and B tests: 30%, with all subjects weighted equally
- A marks: 20% with all subjects weighted equally
- 5 written exams: L1, L2 Maths and two 4-period options, worth 7% each
- 3 oral exams worth 5% each: L1, L2 *or* History *or* Geography, and a third which could be Advanced Maths, a science, a language or Philosophy.
- If you take Advanced L1 or L2, this replaces the basic L1 or L2 in the exams.
- You only take a final exam in two 4-period options. So if you take 3 options, you can choose which two to take to the exam.
- If you do the arithmetic, you will see that the subjects that will count the most are L1 (approximately 17%), L2 (12% or 17%, depending on your choice of oral), Maths (12% or 17% if you take Advanced Maths), and two 4-period options (12% each). All other subjects count no more than 5% each.

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