

University Admissions and Careers Guidance Policy

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Job title: Head of UCAS and Careers

Last review date: June 2021

Next review date: June 2022

Circulation: This policy has been adopted by the governors and is available to parents on request. It is addressed to all members of staff and volunteers and applies wherever they are working with children.

‘Parents’ refers to parents, guardians and carers

Personnel

Managing students' university applications is one of the key functions of the college. A dedicated team exists to advise students on university admissions and career choices.

This consists of:

- Head of Universities & Careers (responsible to Senior Vice Principal Academic)
- University Admissions Tutors (UATs)

This team works with students and parents to advise on the most appropriate courses linked to interest, future careers and previous and potential academic levels. Each student is given much individual and tailored support to ensure they apply for the right university courses. For students wishing to pursue a career or other training after DLD College, advice and guidance will be offered and this is usually designed specifically for individual cases or targeted groups rather than delivered *en masse* to large cohorts.

Students are responsible for completing the online application form with guidance/support from UATs. They must enter: Personal details, Course Choices, Education, Employment and Personal Statement. Specific guidance is given on choosing appropriate universities, courses, entry requirements, English and Maths qualifications, etc. UATs must also check that their international students meet their T4 visa requirements (continuous academic progression).

The online application form must be completed in the year before university progression. All external deadlines set by UCAS and all internal deadlines set by the Head of Universities must be met. These deadlines (for 2021-22) include:

30 September	Final date for Oxbridge and Medicine applications (internal)
30 September	Final date for Oxbridge and Medicine references
15 October	Final date to send Oxbridge and Medicine applications to UCAS
1 November	Deadline for teachers to file subject references in UCAS database
1 November	Deadline for students to complete Personal Statements
15 November	Deadline for students to submit UCAS applications to DLD
1 December	Deadline UATs to check personal statements and complete references
26 January	Deadline for submission of applications to UCAS

Observance of deadlines

For the UCAS cycle to run smoothly, students and responsible staff must be mindful of deadlines – which are essential to enable the stages of the cycle to be completed without conflicting with other college deadlines.

- UATs are responsible for ensuring that the students under their supervision are aware of the key external and internal deadlines.
- Students who fail to meet deadlines will be warned by their UAT on the first occasion, and by the Head of Universities on the second occasion.
- If students still fail to meet their obligations, they will be referred to their HM who will meet with the student and/or liaise with their parents/agents/guardians.
- Once the student complies and fulfils the required stage of the application process, s/he will be referred back to their UAT
- Students who refuse to comply will continue to be managed by their HM and risk losing their opportunity to apply to university.

Key policies

- Students are advised to ensure that they currently, or will by the time of enrolment, have achieved the required qualifications and scores to be eligible for their desired courses.
- Students will be supported by their UAT or the Head of Universities when checking course entry requirements.
- It is ultimately the student's responsibility to research entry requirements and to have ensured they can meet all conditions. This is particularly critical in relation to minimum Mathematics and English Proficiency qualifications.
- Students are given advice on applying to Russell Group universities as well as information on Oxford or Cambridge tests, BMAT, UKCAT, LNAT, etc.
- The exams officer will enter students for tests, but students are themselves responsible for registering for UKCAT, LNAT and SATS tests at a local centre by the required deadline.
- Oxbridge entrance tests must be registered with the Examination Officer before October 15th and these tests will be administered by the College on a nationally determined date in late October/early November.
- Agents and other external consultants may participate in guiding individual students but the final decision on student applications rests with the Head of Universities. DLD does not allow third parties to manage applications, to compose references or to predict grades.

- Where students decide to employ consultants for external advice on their applications – negotiated either independently or provided by DLD – the final decision on applications and course/university choices still remains with the Head of Universities
- All applications must be linked to DLD Centre, processed internally by competent university admissions staff, and approved by the Head of Universities. Any exception to this would be extraordinary and would need to be authorised by the Head of Universities and the Vice Principal Academic.
- DLD College reserves the right not to endorse an application if it is felt that inappropriate course choices are being made against our best academic advice, or if there is any other serious issue which could jeopardise the reputation of the College.
- If independent applications are permitted by the Vice Principal academic, an appropriate reference will be supplied separately to the UCAS portal by the Head of Universities.
- DLD *cannot take any responsibility* for the success or failure of university applications that are not linked to DLD centre and which are not supported by qualified staff.

Personal statement

A personal statement is effectively an ‘interview on paper’, that is, an opportunity to provide admission tutors with relevant evidence of students’ abilities – outstanding or otherwise. When making a UCAS application, students are given the opportunity to state why they want to study the subject they have chosen and to tell something about themselves. It is not the role of the UAT to write the personal statement, only to advise and assist with English and use of appropriate academic terminology.

The UAT’s role is to help collate ideas, order information and proofread the statement, suggesting improvements where applicable. Students must include information on academic subjects and enrichment activities to enhance the application following UCAS guidelines. It should be primarily an academic statement of individual study, achievement, and appropriateness for the desired course.

UATs should guide students to write the most appropriate statement for the course but cannot accept responsibility for students or parents/guardians/agents who choose to change the statement contrary to our advice. Style and content recommendations from university admissions departments will be conveyed to students by the Head of Universities and UATs.

Personal statements are carefully overseen to establish their originality; however, plagiarism of existing text from past personal statements cannot fairly be determined by staff. This is the sole responsibility of the applicant, and if detected by UCAS plagiarism software then their chosen universities will be informed.

References

The reference is the final responsibility of the named referee – either the Head of Universities or an individual UAT. The student has no input and will not be directly consulted on content, except where there is description of mitigating circumstances, in which case the student must be made aware of the content if not the precise wording and must approve of its inclusion.

In such cases it may be appropriate to consult with parents or relevant carers. The student does not have the right to read the reference before it is sent, although in some cases this is useful and can be done at the discretion of the Head of Universities or the responsible UAT.

Applicants have a legal right to a copy of the reference after it has been sent, if requested. If a supporting reference is required for any purposes outside the UCAS portal, it will be entered/ uploaded to the relevant application portal or given to the student or approved third party/ institution as an original signed, stamped pdf document and/or a digital scan of the original document. The Head of Universities is responsible for all applications to non-UK institutions from existing and former students.

References will *not be shared with the student or third parties as an editable document*.

If a student is applying directly to a position of employment, referencing material will be provided in the manner requested by the employer, by an appropriate staff member, and overseen by the Head of Universities. The referee will be provided with a short academic reference from each subject teacher, written in accordance with these guidelines:

- Predicted grade/score(s) separate to text (this prediction can be explained or qualified in the text)
- A positive appraisal of up to 180 words maximum (approx. 1000 total characters)
- Please be mindful that predictions and appraisals are intended to be optimistic, informed by prior performance, and that you are assessing the potential positive effort, progress and achievement of the student until the conclusion of the course next year
- The quality/intensity of positive comment should be commensurate with the prediction
- Subject specificity is essential

UATs should ensure that subject references comment as fully as possible on the following:

- a) Intellectual and analytical abilities
- b) Powers of written and oral expression
- c) Initiative and independent work
- d) Industry and motivation
- e) Approximate ranking within cohort (if positive)
- f) Comparison with previous cohorts (if positive)

- g) Previous relevant performance at GCSE, BTEC, AS or A level, international qualifications / study programmes as appropriate
- h) Super-curricular work/achievement in this subject
- i) Suitability for higher education

Opening Paragraph

References will commence with a paragraph by the UAT starting with a preliminary sentence written by the Head of Universities and approved by the Principal. This is intended to provide a consistent, brief, current, contextual description of the College. The paragraph might in some cases include an attributed quotation from a third party, such as a previous school or, for example, an employer or work experience/internship supervisor if such are relevant to the application. UATs will have met regularly with students over time to obtain information in the following categories to provide content for the introductory paragraph:

- Recent educational history
- Personal motivation
- Personal attributes
- Evidence of teamwork
- Evidence of positions of responsibility
- Evidence of self-directed/independent learning
- Participation in sports/hobbies
- Evidence of relevant work experience
- Extenuating circumstances (if applicable)

The reference may reflect certain content in the personal statement but is not intended to be a reworking of the personal statement; it must be an honest reflection of the College's overall assessment regarding the suitability of the student for their chosen degree course.

Concluding Statement

This is an optional, additional conclusion (space permitting) that reaffirms the level/intensity of endorsement being offered. If all relevant information has already been presented clearly and thoroughly, a concluding statement is unnecessary. In the case of highly competitive applications, the statement will be more significant and decisive, and is usually mentioned. In all cases this is done at the final discretion of the referee.

Quality control

It is the responsibility of UATs to ensure that the final version of the reference submitted for approval is edited for stylistic, grammatical and/or spelling errors. The Head of Universities will check and approve all UCAS references before application are sent. Where references are deficient, subject teachers will be asked to improve or augment their comments.

Tracking the application

The student (now 'applicant') must keep up to date with the progress of their application using UCAS Track online. The Head of Universities and UATs track applications online using the Adviser Portal and advise as appropriate. Applicants are provided with considerable advice with regard to making appropriate choices and replying to offers before their individual deadlines pass, the first of which is usually in May or June. Applicants will receive advice about how best to select their Firm and Insurance offers, taking into account current academic performance and teacher predictions. *The final decision, in the light of advice, is the student's responsibility.* Similarly, while every effort will be made to support students, it is the applicant's own responsibility if she/he fails to reply on UCAS Track in a timely manner. When this happens, offers are automatically declined by default, changing the applicant's status to UCAS Extra, i.e. no offers held.

It is the responsibility of UATs to ensure that the students in their cohort are fully aware of deadlines and aware of the progress of their applications. The Head of Universities will advise on approaching of deadlines, but UATs must communicate directly with each student to keep track of and report students' progress/lack of progress in responding to offers.

Students who for various reasons do not respond to their offers – or decide to withdraw from UCAS Apply – must provide a coherent explanation for their decision.

Relevant reasons might include:

1. Radical change of heart – no longer want to progress to higher education
2. Alternative plans – vocational training/apprenticeship/family business etc.
3. Applying to university outside UK
4. Defer entry for a year

Each of these is a legitimate reason, and UATs should get a statement in writing (saved email) from the student to make sure that the college has correct records. UATs should 'copy in' the Head of Universities to all correspondence on issues of this type, in the event that students' decisions are challenged at a later date by parents or guardians. If students do decide to withdraw from their applications, UATs should encourage them to hold onto their offers at least until results day in case they change their minds.

Interviews/Portfolio Submission/Auditions

Not all subjects or institutions will meet with prospective candidates. Applicants must let us know immediately if they are offered an interview. This gives the college time to prepare appropriate and targeted support. Practical applications such as art, music and drama will have specialised support to prepare for portfolio submissions and auditions.

Medically-related courses, Oxbridge and applicants for teacher training must be prepared to attend interviews and open days – whether in-person or online. Applicants must have the opportunity for a mock interview in order to gain some experience of thinking and reasoning under pressure.

UATs must inform the Head of Universities if students have been invited to interview; they should also liaise with relevant subject leaders whose participation in the mock interview can make the experience more authentic. Some students may have opted for additional external support with interview preparation, and UATs should be supportive and cooperative in this.

Writing to universities

Writing directly to an admissions tutor is often the best way to find out answers to specific queries. Universities are frequently more responsive to enquiries from applicants and potential applicants than those from teachers or parents. Information and/or assurances given verbally by telephone or in person are not compelling.

If relied upon when making decisions any such information or assurances should be attributed to a named individual with current contact information for future reference if needed.

UATs should be proactive with complex issues. As the named referee on the applicant's UCAS form, the UAT is allowed to make representation on their behalf. If the issue is sufficiently problematic, UATs should refer the matter to the Head of Universities who will attempt to resolve it.

UATs should keep a record of conversations and emails concerning their students. Ideally, a file should be made in Outlook for each student to store relevant emails in the event of future disputes. Records for each student should also be stored in One Note, which will be reviewed if necessary in line-management meetings with the Head of Universities.

Work experience/Work shadowing/Voluntary Work/Enrichment

Appropriate work experience should be pursued to support certain university applications and this can be discussed with teachers and tutors. We share information when opportunities become available. Due to the variety of subjects and specialisms offered at the college, currently we do not have the uniform cohorts that would make regular, long-term arrangements with particular employers practicable. However, a variety of opportunities are regularly pursued by the academic faculties and the Alpha Scholars programme. Competitive universities continue to value practical work experience gained independently above that facilitated by an applicant's school or college.

Our enrichment programme forms an integral part of the College curriculum to enable applicants to demonstrate additional skills and responsibilities that will support the academic content of their applications. This programme is extensive and regularly reviewed.

UATs should remind students they must evidence outstanding academic achievement if they are applying to highly competitive universities. Evidence can include:

- membership and active participation in academic societies
- success in essay competitions/Olympiads etc.
- extension and enrichment activities
- advanced reading in the subject
- participation in additional courses and summer schools
- work experience

University Partnerships

The Head of Universities and UATs will work together to ensure that Year 12 students benefit from communication and partnerships with universities – particularly, but not exclusively, institutions that are popular with DLD students. HE enrichment will commence for Year 12 in the spring term.

Non-UCAS Applications

Direct applications, overseas applications and/or those utilising alternative portals (e.g. Common Application for US universities) are overseen by the Head of Universities. These may be delegated to Directors of Studies or departmental specialists where appropriate.

The Head of Universities will keep a list of students in Year 12 who express an interest in non-UK applications, and it is essential for UATs to identify which individuals in their cohort are interested in alternative pathways.

UCAS Extra

In the event of no offers or declining available offers, applicants have the ability to contact universities directly to discuss whether an offer might be made and can apply to universities singly until an offer is made and accepted. This process is ongoing throughout the year. Guidance and advice is available at the College in these cases. Applicants in Extra automatically default to Clearing status during the summer before Results Day. Very few students use this facility, and UATs should make clear to their students how the system works.

Results/Clearing/Adjustment/Remarks

Applicants declined by Firm and Insurance choices for failing to meet entry requirements will default to Clearing/Clearing Plus and will be given a Clearing ID in UCAS Track. They can contact universities with available places by telephone and/or email in order to secure an alternative course. Any agreements will expire after the university's stated deadline. The Head of Universities will be available at college in person on results day or via email/Teams (contracted hours) to support and advise in this process, but applicants are required to be proactive, and urged to acquire a number of agreements before selecting the desired option in UCAS Track. Universities will only communicate directly with the applicant. Clearing concludes at the end of the application cycle.

Applicants whose results have exceeded predictions have up to five working days to research alternative courses and communicate with universities while maintaining their guaranteed place. They will be notified of this Adjustment status by UCAS. The Head of Universities will be available to advise. In all cases UCAS Track, Adviser Portal and the UCAS course search tool (which is updated daily) are utilised.

The Head of Universities and UATs will liaise with the Examinations Officer and applicants when a university has been requested to await the outcome of a remark. Universities have their own deadlines for consideration of remarks, and some do not consider them – there is no obligation for them to do so as it is an examination board matter. However, they can show discretion. The College does not have influence to negotiate in such situations but every effort will be made to support and to endorse the applicant with relevant communication and advocacy.

End of Application Cycle

The Head of Universities and UATs will continue to communicate with unplaced applicants to determine their plans until the end of the application cycle, which is at the end of September of the year of application. The final destinations data will be confirmed by the Head of Universities and shared with appropriate individuals and departments within the college and Alpha Plus Group.

A complete guide to the UCAS apply cycle for UATs and other relevant staff is available here:

<https://www.ucas.com/file/373581/download?token=OkH9dp16>

Careers guidance

At DLD College, students are supported by a team of people who advise on careers, post-16 subject choices and university admissions. This team is composed primarily of the Head of Universities and UATs, who will also contribute to careers advice in their role.

UATs should interview year 12 students in their cohort about subject choices and career aspirations and balance these against their academic potential. This communication should begin as early as possible in year 12 so that the Head of Universities can assemble as much information as possible on student preferences and aspirations ahead of registration on UCAS in the summer term.

UCAS recommends that careers provision in colleges and schools should include:

- Advice on careers fairs
- Attendance at careers fairs
- Mentoring
- Arranging employer visits and talks
- College and university visits
- Access to careers websites

Careers advice at DLD College should also meet the 'Gatsby' benchmarks – namely:

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each pupil
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

Delivery of the Programme

DLD College has a varied programme of careers education that is delivered through PHSE lessons for year 9/10/11 as well as talks from internal and external speakers, trips, one-to-one sessions, careers fair and assemblies organised by Heads of Faculties and also within individual departments for year 12, 13 and 14. A series of events is organised to suit various year groups' needs. The Head of Universities and Careers and UATs will liaise with the Head of Lower School to discuss university and career issues. During the Autumn Term, year 11 students are invited to discuss post-16 choices. These activities enable students to make informed career choices and also encourage them to reach their full potential. Later on, students take part in taster days before selecting their post 16 options.

Careers guidance for year 12s is the most important task, however. UATs should make every effort to encourage students in their cohort to take practical steps towards realising their career ambitions by aligning academic and vocational aspirations.

Year 12/13/14 students will attend various events such as lectures and university fairs, and listen to talks by external professional speakers (“Meet the professionals” with BTEC students, for example). IFP students, who are all EAL, have a dedicated time in the schedule for the Personal Development programme to assist in preparing them for employment/UCAS – in addition to input from UATs.

All students have an opportunity to make an appointment with the Head of Universities and Careers to obtain personalized advice. The goal is to ensure that accurate, up-to-date and impartial advice is given on the changing employment market and career opportunities, and to refer students to the right internal or external person for additional guidance.

A key event in the DLD college annual diary is National Careers Week, held in March. The Head of Universities and Careers, assisted by UATs, will organize events and presentations to coincide with this important fixture in the academic year.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is the responsibility of the Head of Universities and Careers, with input from UATs and subject leaders, to oversee and organise the monitoring and evaluation of the Careers Programme and the impact of the programme on students. This is done through student and staff feedback and surveys.