

IB DIPLOMA STUDENTS APPLYING TO UK UNIVERSITIES

The UK/European Applications Office provides information and guidance to students who are seeking to apply to Universities in the UK and continental Europe. Its function is to assist and facilitate students in their efforts and endeavours to seek acceptance from those Universities which match their personality, aptitudes and academic performance.

- All applications to Universities/Colleges in the UK are processed by a central authority, namely UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service). The UCAS site (www.ucas.com) is the most comprehensive and updated source of information regarding courses, application procedures, admission requirements, tuition fees, etc.
- All applications to tertiary institutions in the UK must be submitted on-line to UCAS between mid-September and mid-December of the student's IB2 year.
- Applications containing Oxford or Cambridge entries or courses in Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine or Veterinary Science must be submitted by 15 October of that year.
- A student is entitled to only **one** UCAS application in each year's application cycle and a **maximum of 6 course choices**. A **maximum of 4 choices only** is allowed for medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine/science for each application cycle.
- Primarily because of the intense competition for limited places on certain undergraduate courses, applications should be submitted **as early as possible** in the application period (in the second year of the IB program). Universities and Colleges guarantee to consider an application that is submitted by the appropriate deadline.
- After the completed application is submitted to UCAS, each University and College will only receive (from UCAS) the details of the course or courses that the student has applied for at that University or College.
- The University or College entered on the application will decide whether, or not, to make the applicant an offer. For example, for a competitive Economics' course the offer might be an overall IB grade of 38, including a 6 in Economics and Mathematics; for a selective Law course, an offer may stipulate a total of 38 IB points, including a 6 in English, etc.
- The decision by a University to make a student an offer is not solely based upon the applicant being predicted to obtain the published grades for that particular course. Grades published in various sources (including

the UCAS site) serve as an **indicative** grade boundary for admission and should be treated as nothing more than the “**typical**” **grade** requirement. A university decision is obviously based on other considerations, some being solely internal to the Institution (funding, facilities, quotas, age policy, etc).

- It is possible that a University or College makes a student an offer beyond the stated grade requirements or not one at all, despite the fact that the applicant’s academic achievements are well within (or often exceed!) the “typical offer” statistics. This is due to the ever-increasing competition for university places due to constantly rising standards globally of secondary education, the enlargement of the applicant pool because of EU expansion, the popularity of certain courses etc.
- When all universities/courses to which the student has applied have replied with an offer or a rejection, the student must decide which offers, if any, s/he wishes to hold. The applicant student can nominate and affirm only **up to two offers** (Firm and Insurance) at this stage.
- The increasing competition for the same number of University places makes the selection procedures resemble those of a “free market”: offers are made to the students who meet not only the grade criteria, but also are seen as a better “match” for the type of University or College or Faculty. This is where the student’s personal profile (communication skills, independence of thought, power of expression, ability for compassion, awareness, motivation, drive, inquisitiveness, etc) comes seriously into play.
- Often opting for the emerging “brand name” of the University Department and not the “brand name” University is the more conducive path to a successful and rewarding academic career. Students may wish to pay regard to the published evaluation reports of Universities and individual University Departments which give pertinent insights into specific institutions’ strengths in specific fields.
- The burgeoning applicant pool has compelled universities to introduce further admission criteria, in addition to academic and extracurricular accomplishments.
- The **interview** is increasing in popularity as a means of selecting students among Universities or Colleges. So, beyond the long-established procedures of Oxford, Cambridge, and medical and architecture faculties, an increasing number of universities are resorting to interviewing their prospective students.
- Additional selection criteria may also include: the BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT) for admission to certain medical courses (www.bmat.org.uk) and the National Admissions Test for Law (www.lnat.ac.uk) for certain Law Departments.

- Exposure to the “real world” through volunteerism, sample work, written tests at interview, additional essay(s) about the specific choice of course(s), an Art Portfolio, extra-curricular activities etc. may also be taken into account in making an offer.
- Through the compulsory components of Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) Theory of Knowledge (ToK) and the Extended Essay, IB students definitely gain in knowledge, independence, maturity, self-discipline, awareness. However worthy these learning experiences may be, solid background knowledge pertaining to the specific academic domain (medical, legal, ethical, economic etc.) and pursued through **general personal reading** is indispensable.