



# POST-18 PATHWAYS GUIDANCE 2024-25



# Post-18 Pathways Available:

- **Under-graduate degree at university**
- **Degree Apprenticeship**
- **Higher Education Study**
- **Higher Apprenticeship**
- **Employment (not linked to apprenticeship)**
- **Gap year travel / volunteering**

The range of opportunities can be quite daunting, but we hope you will find this booklet helpful in making an informed decision.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to answer all questions within one booklet, so please speak to your tutor, or myself ([sxj@abbeyfield.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:sxj@abbeyfield.wilts.sch.uk)) if you have any questions or concerns, or simply want to talk to someone about the different pathways, and what might be the most appropriate choice for yourself.

Finally, remember, once you have secured good Level 3 qualifications, you will always be able to access these opportunities, even if currently you chose not to do so.

If you are unsure, a good starting point would be talk to myself or your tutor, and / or access the link below:

<https://www.ucas.com/what-are-my-options>

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## **UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE- UNIVERISTY**

Having a degree is a requirement for an increasing number of professions and graduates can expect to earn considerably more than non-graduates. In 2023, graduates earned on average, £10,000 pa more than non-graduates, and over a lifetime approx. £130,000 more than those without a degree.

Securing your degree through studying at university provides an opportunity to leave home and live independently whilst learning, and will provide you with access to a wide range of job roles and opportunities on graduation.

There is an initial cost to studying at university (see below), but over time this is off-set by increased earning potential, as well as the life experience of studying and living away from home.

### **Undergraduate Degree: Choosing a Course**

This is something that you need to be researching NOW. It is important that you consider both location, and course content.

Whilst all post-graduate degrees will add value to future employability and earnings, some top employers and professions will also consider the university where you achieved your degree, with more value for degrees awarded by top universities.

The most prestigious degrees are obtained from Russel Group Universities

#### [Universities | Informed Choices](#)

As you would expect, this is reflected in their entry requirements, which generally will range from A\*, A\*, A\* to a mixture of A\*-B, and you will need a strong personal statement to set you aside from other applicants.

Non-Russell Group university courses are accessible with lower entry grades, although the higher the grade requirement (tariff – see appendix), the better the course.

For some, the course will be straight forward as you have chosen a career path that requires a certain degree, so you know what you need to achieve. However, for many professions, entry is post-graduate regardless of the degree so you may simply want to take a degree in a subject that you are interested in, rather than specific to a career choice.

There are thousands of different courses, and this can be quite overwhelming. I would suggest looking at list of courses at universities you are interested in attending, Courses tend to be listed under subject areas, so for example if you are studying Business, look at management and business courses and explore the range of degree courses available.

That said, this is a big decision, and I would very strongly recommend that you spend some time thinking about this. Choosing the wrong course can result in students

dropping out of courses, so if you are at all unsure please talk to friend, parents and teachers before making decision.

You also need to consider the best location for yourself. Do you want to study on a big city campus, or would you rather a smaller campus or a university out the outskirts of a city, or in a more rural location?

Also, consider if you want a course with opportunities for a year abroad, as an increasing number of undergraduate courses do offer this option, and it may well be something that could support you to secure post-graduate positions with multi-national organisations and the chance to live and work aboard in the future.

### **RECOMMENDED LINKS TO SUPPORT DECISIONS**

<https://www.ucas.com/explore>

<https://www.ucas.com/explore/unis>

<https://www.ucas.com/explore/locations>

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### **UCAS: APPLICATIONS – KEY DATES**

2024/5 courses are available to explore on UCAS from **30<sup>th</sup> April 2024 i.e. NOW**, and applications can be opened from **14<sup>th</sup> May 2024 (conservatoire 12<sup>th</sup> July** – although you cannot submit an application until **3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023**.

### **DEADLINES:**

- Oxbridge & Medical: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024 (**Internal deadline 8<sup>th</sup> October 2023**)
- Conservatoires: Application deadlines vary, so please use the link to check for your particular course - <https://digital.ucas.com/search>
- All other universities: 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024, but ASAP advised (**internal deadline: 13<sup>th</sup> December 2024**)

[Find key dates | UCAS](#)

### **Medical / Veterinary / Dentistry**

You MUST let me know ASAP if you are intending applying for these courses as you have an earlier deadline, and we need to support you to achieve this.

You can only apply to 4 courses, and we recommend your other option is reserved for a back-up choice such as biomedicine or similar.

You would be expected to provide evidence of work experience in a related environment, and / or on-line equivalent where this hasn't been possible. This will be

evidenced in your personal statement, and evidence may be requested at interview.

Please check emails from myself as I will share any on-line work experience / clinical practise opportunities throughout the year.

You are able to have time off school to complete work experience, or equivalent, but please discuss with me before making any arrangements.

### **MEDICAL: UCAT Exam (£70)**

You will have to complete a UCAT (University Clinical Aptitude Test) **before submitting**. This year these will be completed on-line, or at a local test centre (details on the link below), and you need to apply now to secure a slot.

Bookings open on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024, with the first exams on 8<sup>th</sup> July. Booking deadlines is 19<sup>th</sup> September 2024, with the last exam on 26<sup>th</sup> September. UCAS are advising booking earlier slots. Results are received immediately following your test.

[UCAT Registration 2024: Key UCAT Test Dates + How To Book \(themedicportal.com\)](https://www.themedicportal.com/ucat-2024-key-dates-how-to-book)

I would strongly recommend completing **practise tests on-line**:  
<http://practice.ukcat.ac.uk/pages/menu.aspx?pack=bd52c8e6-da13-44a8-ac5d-3a02d2c1e21b>

### **Oxbridge**

You MUST let me know ASAP if you are intending applying for these courses as you have an earlier deadline, and we need to support you to achieve this.

We can also direct to you to on-line courses, and locally run programmes that will provide guidance and advise to support you to be successful in a highly competitive environment.

You can only apply to one college at each of Oxford and Cambridge, with your other applications comprising non-Oxbridge pathways.

**After submission**, you will be required to complete an admissions test, which will arrange in school, so once you receive a request, you need to notify us as we can then book this for you.

I would strongly recommend completing practise tests on-line:  
<https://oxbridgeapplications.com/mock-tests/>

### **Conservatoires**

These are for performance-based courses including music, drama and screen production courses. Conservatoire courses are based around individual tuition, as well as practical training and frequent opportunities to perform. All teaching staff at

conservatoires are working professionals. There is a strong emphasis on one-to-one tuition, alongside group work and performances

Universities offer similar under-graduate courses to conservatoires, so please do research all options before making a decision.

The application process is similar, but you will have to attend an interview

For more information, please see UCAS link below:

<https://www.ucas.com/conservatoires>

## **Nursing / Physio / Paramedic etc**

You would be expected to provide evidence of work experience in a related environment, and / or on-line equivalent where this hasn't been possible. This will be evidenced in your personal statement, and evidence may be requested at interview.

Please check emails from myself as I will share any on-line work experience / clinical practise opportunities throughout the year.

You are able to have time off school to complete work experience, or equivalent, but please discuss with me before making any arrangements.

## **Undergraduate Degree: Choosing a University**

Think carefully about where you want to spend the next 3 or 4 years. Do you want to look at local universities such as Bath, Gloucester or Bristol, which provides the option to live at home, or do you want to look further away and live independently?

This is a big decision, and I would very strongly recommend that you spend some time thinking about this. Choosing the wrong university can result in students dropping out of courses, or just being very homesick and unhappy. So, if you are at all unsure please talk to friend, parents and teachers before making decision.

### **Open Days:**

Universities provide the option of visiting campuses in person, or via virtual events if you are unable to travel to universities. Some universities will require you to register in advance if you wish to attend these, so please check university home pages.

We are able to authorise absence to attend open days, interviews and holder / applicant days.

See link below for more details of open events:

[UCAS University open days - explore unis before you apply](#)

I would strongly recommend that you do visit university campuses and towns before accepting a place at a university as you need to get a good feel for a place before deciding to spend 3 or 4 years there.

## **Undergraduate Degree: APPLICATION**

- 3-year undergraduate degree courses.
- 4-year undergraduate degree courses which include a placement year.
- 4-year undergraduate degree course which include a Masters option (you can also apply for Masters degree course after a 3-year degree).
- 1-year Foundation degree course. These are lower entry requirement, and will secure you a qualification after a year, and allow progress to a full 3-year degree on completion. Recommended as a back-up option if you are unsure about grades and / or committing to a 3-year degree course.

You should start your application as soon as possible, as these take time to completed, and rushed applications tend to lead to hasty and poorly informed decision on universities and / or courses.

There is **excellent step-by-step guidance on the UCAS website:**

[How to fill in the UCAS application | Undergraduate | UCAS](#)

PSHE teachers will also support you with completing your application.

Whilst we would strongly recommend that you do use all five available choices (but choose universities and courses carefully – see above), you can submit an application with less choices, or add additional choices at a later date, BUT only if you haven't received an offer.

University admissions teams will start looking at your application as soon as it's received. Some will respond with a day or two, others will wait until their own internally set deadline, so response times do vary – but remember to check emails regularly as they will often require quick responses to information sent.

If you are applying for a course where an interview is required as part of the application process (this will be clear on the course details), you are permitted to request absence from school to attend – likewise to visit any campuses before making decisions.

Once you have started your application process you will have to create login details and a password. **Do not lose this information as you will need to use this to check status, and accept offers.**

### **Applying - Buzzword**

As part of our application process, you will be required to provide a 'Buzzword'.

**2024/25 buzzword: Chocolate25**

This links you to Abbeyfield School and it is **essential that you correctly enter this** otherwise we will not have access to process your application.

## **Applying – Payment**

The application fee is £27.50 regardless of the number of universities you apply for (this is a change to previous years). Maximum of 5 universities.

This is requested before your application can be submitted.

## **PERSONAL STATEMENT**

All applications require you to provide a Personal Statement.

**IMPORTANT:** EVERYONE will be expected to complete a personal statement (university and non-university) ahead of our Employability Day in the last week of term, as this will be shared with your interviewer for feedback.

Tutors and PSHE teachers will support you with these during Term 5 and Term 6. If you are unsure of course choices, you can adjust this ahead of finalising applications at the start of Year 13.

This is your opportunity to stand out from all the other applicants; to tell the university why they should choose you for their course, many of which will be over-subscribed.

Personal statements can be adapted to support apprenticeship and /or non-apprenticeship job applications.

The UCAS Personal Statement is your opportunity to tell universities about your suitability for the course/s that you have decided to study.

You need to demonstrate your enthusiasm and commitment, and above all ensure that you stand out from the crowd.

The UCAS website provides some brilliant tips and advice on writing effective personal statements, and I would strongly recommend that you access these before starting, and once you have completed your first draft.

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement>

There are also lots of subject specific exemplars available on their website:

<https://web.ucas.com/personal-statement-guides>

**Also see Abbeyfield Personal Statement Booklet which provides lots more information and guidance – this will be emailed.**



## DEADLINES:

Your draft personal statement should be completed during Term 5 & Term 6 ahead of your Employability Day interview in the last week of term as this will be submitted to your interviewer for feedback.

We will provide time in tutor sessions and PSHE lessons to write this.

Your final personal statement should be **completed by end of November** (September for medial, veterinary or Oxbridge) as you **MUST** submit your application no later than mid-December to ensure we can finalise your submission ahead of deadlines.

## Applying - School Reference

School references have 3 sections:

1. School context i.e. details about Abbeyfield curriculum offer etc (this is provided by myself).
2. Extenuating circumstances i.e. any circumstances at home or in school which may affect outcomes. Tutors will complete this based on information you / parents provide (\*/\*\*see below), and information from subject lead teachers.
3. Other supporting information i.e. personal or academic strengths. Tutors will complete this with you.

\*As part of our Academic Mentoring with tutors, parents and yourself in Term 6, we will be asking you to provide contextual information to support your application. For example, are you the first in family to go to university, do you qualify for bursary funding, are you a carer or recently bereaved or facing any health challenges.

\*\*We will also provide any school-based context, including if there have been any challenging circumstances in school such as changes to teaching staff, or reduced teaching hours, which may potentially impact on outcomes.

This is **REALLY important as this could qualify you for a CONTEXTUAL OFFER i.e. a lower entry requirement**, so please make sure you do share any relevant information with tutors. Universities may request evidence before making offers.

## Applying - Predicted Grade

Predicted grades are determined by Year 12 mock exams, continued assessments in lessons up to the date of application, and our professional judgement of the progress you are likely to make during Year 13.

Teachers will be as positive as possible with these grades as we want you to be successful in securing a place at your preferred university, but grades do need to be evidence based. We will provide as many opportunities as possible to evidence your best possible grade prior to finalising your predicted grade.

If you need a particular grade, talk to your teacher so they are aware of what you need to achieve to secure a place.

**You MUST check predicted grades with teachers before applying for courses.** If not, you risk wasting choices on courses for which you do not meet entry requirement and will therefore be rejected.

Tutors will also make sure these are shared with you prior to your application being submitted. It is **your responsibility** to ensure that these align with courses you are applying to study.

## **Undergraduate Degree: Finance**

Course fees are typically £9,250 per year, paid via student loan that you repay following graduation. You can choose to pay fees upfront rather than taking out a student loan.

Undergraduate courses are generally 3 years, but an increasingly number of courses have a 4-year option, which includes a work placement year, often with the opportunity to complete this abroad.

You also need to factor in your cost of living, including accommodation if you are attending a university away from home. This varies depending on your choice of university and standard of accommodation. You are also able to apply for maintenance grants to cover some of these costs, which are assessed based on your parent's income.

There is lots of information on finance on the UCAS website:

<https://www.ucas.com/money> and individual universities will also provide their own information via their home pages.

Applications for student finance are via the link below from March 2025:

[Apply online for student finance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

## **Undergraduate Degree- Next Steps**

**We will also provide more support and guidance on this at the start of term 3, Year 13.**

Once you have submitted your application, you will start to receive emails from universities so you need to check our emails regularly.

Some courses may require you to complete admissions tests, attend interviews and / or applicant days so you need to make sure you don't overlook any requests. Offers will be made following interviews etc.

For other courses, you will receive an immediate conditional or unconditional offer.

A **conditional offer** is subject to achieving certain grades in your exams.

An **unconditional offer** is just that, an offer based on your application and predicted grades only. Whilst this sounds great, as there is less pressure on exam grades and you have the security of knowing where you are going to be studying and can even book your accommodation (and your Ikea trip), you need to think about the quality of a course where they are less concerned about your actual grades.

Our advice would always be to have a discussion with teachers before accepting an unconditional offer.

If you accept an unconditional offer, you must remember that whilst the university may not require a certain grade, employers will most definitely be looking at A Level / BTEC grades. Do you really want to leave school without achieving qualification that will enable you to be successful in your future career – and which you can be proud of?

The process of accepting courses is relatively straight forward, although be aware that you cannot accept a place until you have had a response from all universities.

If your firm choice is conditional, you can also accept an insurance (back-up) choice. If your place is conditional, the university will ask you to reject all other offers in order to accept this place.

There is no pressure to make early decisions if you don't want to, as you have until May make your final decision. Any offers are valid until this date, although some unconditional will ask you to immediately accept to secure your place. Again, do not do so without discussing with a teacher.

There is a lot of information to help you with tracking your application, and next steps, on the UCAS link below:

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/after-you-apply/track-your-ucas-application>

### **Deferred Entry:**

If you want to take a gap year before starting your course in Sept 2026, you should still apply this year and select the option to defer your course for a year – please check course details carefully as some courses do not offer this option (in which case you will need to apply as an external candidate next year, and nominate Abbeyfield to provide your reference)

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/when-apply/deferred-entry>

If you have already applied and subsequently wish to defer your course, you will need to speak to your provider as this may be possible, although for some courses you would need to withdraw and apply in the following year.

BUT, if you are unsure of courses, it may be better to apply in 2025/26. We will still be able to support by providing a reference (add my email when asked for a reference).

## **Changing Courses**

If you wish to change courses, but with the same provider, this is sometimes possible prior to starting. You will need to contact the university admissions office to discuss. Any decisions will be based on entry requirements and availability.

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## **DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP**

Securing your degree through an employer means that you will be working whilst studying. This is hard work, and is certainly not the easy option, but is a very good decision if you are confident about your future career path and you don't mind missing out on the university experience. You will need to be proactive and organised to secure an apprenticeship – employers will be paying for your degree so they only want the best and most impressive applicants.

Salaries are at entry-level, but employer are also paying the cost of your degree course. Some will also offer subsidised accommodation or travel if you need to relocate for your work.

As your employer has invested in your degree, you will be expected to remain with your employer for the duration of your studies, and a number of years following this. If you leave, they would be entitled to ask you to pay the cost of your degree.

As you are working at the same time, it will take typically 4-5 years to secure your degree rather than 3 years.

You will spend approximately 80% of your time working, with 20% set aside for study – this may be on a university campus.

Degree apprenticeships are advertised through employers, and you will have to complete a rigorous selection process to be successful. They are highly sought after, and very competitive. You will need top grades, as well as be able to demonstrate personal experience and qualities that make you stand out from other applicants.

All employers who offer Degree Apprenticeships are government approved, and subject to stringent checks to monitor the quality of the training.

There is also more information on Degree Apprenticeships on both UCAS and Government Apprenticeship websites:

<https://www.ucas.com/understanding-apprenticeships>

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

<https://amazingapprenticeships.com/>

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## HIGHER APPRENTICESHIP

These are full-time jobs with a study element – typically a 30-hour working week, plus a day of study toward professional qualifications through an approved awarding body.

Any Tuition fees are paid by your employer but, as with degree apprenticeships, you must commit to remaining with your employer, so you need to be 100% sure about the sector you are entering before you apply.

Degree apprenticeships are advertised through employers, and you will have to complete a rigorous selection process to be successful. They are highly sought after, and very competitive. You will need good grades, as well as be able to demonstrate personal experience and qualities that make you stand out from other applicants.

All employers who offer Higher Apprenticeships are government approved, and subject to stringent checks to monitor the quality of the training.

There is also more information on Higher Apprenticeships on both UCAS and Government Apprenticeship websites:

<https://www.ucas.com/understanding-apprenticeships>

<https://amazingapprenticeships.com/>

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

It is also important to check website for relevant companies to find out more about their apprenticeship schemes.

## TRAVEL / GAP YEAR

Assuming that parents are supportive, this can be a really sensible choice if you are unsure about what you want to do post-18, or just don't feel ready for the next step, particularly if it involves leaving home.

If you have applied to university but subsequently decide you would like to take a gap year, for most courses it is possible to defer for a year. You will need to contact your university admissions team to discuss.

If you are feeling adventurous, there are lots of organisations that will help you to undertake volunteering abroad. Some will have a small cost which is often covered by fundraising, others may be free on the basis you are completing projects on arrival.

There is further information on gap years on the UCAS website:

<https://www.ucas.com/alternatives/gap-year/gap-years-ideas-and-things-think-about>

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## **EMPLOYMENT: PUBLIC SERVICES**

### **POLICE FORCE**

There are lots of different routes to access a career with the police.

You can either join their 3-year degree apprenticeship at post-18 (Professional Policing Degree) or continue to university and join at post-graduate level having already obtained this degree.

As a police officer, you will be expected to take responsibility for developing your own skills, and ensuring that your fitness levels are maintained as the work can be demanding, both physically and mentally.

There is further information on joining the Police on the website below:

<https://www.joiningthepolice.co.uk/ways-in-to-policing>

### **FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**

The process of joining the Fire Service varies according to where you live, and is quite complicated (see link to website below). It is a very rewarding career with a continuous training programme by attending lectures, exercises, practical training sessions and other forms of training to maintain competence levels.

As a fire officer, you will be expected to take responsibility for developing your own skills, and ensuring that your fitness levels are maintained as the work can be demanding, both physically and mentally.

As part of the application process, you will need to pass a fitness test. Although slightly less onerous than in the past, this is still rigorous and you will need to get fit to pass the test.

There is further information on joining the Fire and Rescue service on the website below: <http://www.fireservice.co.uk/recruitment/>

### **ARMED FORCES**

There are wide variety of post-18 apprenticeships routes into the armed forces.

These can provide a very secure and good career pathway and opportunities to see the World and expand horizons – BUT you need to be very clear that you will be expected to take part in armed conflicts, so this is not an easy option.

You can apply post-18 with your Level 3 qualification and receive further training once enrolled. However, to progress to the higher ranks you will require a degree, so you may need to go to university dependent on your career goals – and there are opportunities for sponsored university places via armed forces pathways.

For all of the forces options, as part of the application process you will need to pass a fitness test. This is rigorous, and is a stumbling block for many applicants so ensure you get fit before you apply – and then stay fit as you will be continually assessed

If you are interested in joining any of the armed forces see links below which will provide more information, and contact local recruitment offices to be clearer on recruitments windows and opportunities (you may find you have to wait 1 or 2 years before you can apply).

**ARMY:** <https://www.army.mod.uk/careers/>

**RAF:** <https://www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment/find-your-role>

**Royal Navy:** <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/joining>

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**FINALLY**, to reiterate that you are not expected to know exactly what you want to do, so do not panic if you are unsure. There is no pressure to make decisions (although if you are even vaguely thinking about university, you should apply and then withdraw if you change your mind) – and there is always the option of taking a year out before committing to university or apprenticeships.

Just focus on securing the best possible outcomes for your qualifications, so you have as many options as possible in the future.

**TALK** to tutors or myself if you are still worried. We can only help if you ask.

**Good luck 😊**

## Appendix: UCAS Tariff Points

### Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate

Grade	Tariff points
D*	56
D	48
M	32
P	16

### AS and AS VCE

Official title: Advanced Subsidiary GCE and Advanced Subsidiary VCE

Grade	Tariff points
A	20
B	16
C	12
D	10
E	6

### A level and Advanced VCE

Official title: Advanced GCE and Advanced VCE

Grade	Tariff points
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16