

COLSTON'S SCHOOL

Nearly everything
you always wanted to know about...

HIGHER EDUCATION

...but were afraid to ask!

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Some useful websites

Colstonians at the Russell Group of UK Universities; as of September 2008

Birmingham University	Alex Batt Grant Blackwell Nicola Clark Chris Flower Ben Mason Peter Clark Peter Jewkes Joe Page Wendy van der Meij Tom Cloake Bryony Whitaker	Modern Languages (2006) Chemical Engineering (2006) Medicine (2006) Physiotherapy (2006) Maths with Business Management (2006) Chemical Engineering (2007) Philosophy (2007) War Studies (2007) Mathematics (2007) Medicine (2008) English & Philosophy (2008)
Bristol University	Nicola Booy Steven But	Law (2005) Chemistry (2007)
Cambridge University	Tom England	(2009)
Cardiff University	Will Cox Panda Ke Chris Thorne Gareth Williams Caroline Bromley Catherine Houlihan Anthony Jones Tom Falconer Hall Gagan Singh	Maths (2006) Maths (2006) Communication (2006) Business Management (2006) English (2007) Psychology (2007) Law & French (2007) Medicine (2008) Medicine (2008)
Edinburgh University	Jamie Doubleday Caitlin Ross	Sports & Recreation Management (2007) Philosophy & Psychology (2007)
Glasgow University		
Imperial College London	Kirstie Pottier Amy Nommeots-Nomm	Biology (2006) Material Science (2008)
King's College London	Fran Roe	Maths (2007)
Leeds University	Rob Mitchell Peter Stirratt Bryce Titman	Chemistry (2006) Politics & Russian Civilisation (2008) History (2007)
Liverpool University	James Masters	Medicine (2008)
London School of Economics		
Manchester University	Stacey-Jo Webster Tom Carpenter Tom Peacock	Medicine (2007) History (2008) Philosophy (2008)
Newcastle University	Amy Jewkes Sadiqur Rahman	Business Accounting & Finance (2005) Chemistry with Medicinal Chem (2005)
Nottingham University	Charlotte Collins	Law (2006)

Oxford University	Jordan Perry David Thomas	Modern History (2006) PPE (2008)
Sheffield University	Hannah Coller	Medicine (2004)
Southampton University	Neal Buffery Nick Carpenter Dan Cook Charlotte Mardle James Milne Alastair Paynter Josh Robson-Hemmings James Withers James Wood David Russell	Computer Science (2006) Mathematics (2007) History (2007) Chemistry (2007) Maths with Actuarial Studies (2007) History (2007) Physics (2007) Mathematics (2008) Chemistry (2007) Mechanical Engineering (2008)
University College London (UCL)	Catherine Small	Psychology (2007)
Warwick University	Ben Ellis Alex Emery Billy Halani Sarah Hartles William Poon Rob Channon Kimberley Martin Lisa Yip	Maths (2006) Maths (2006) Maths (2006) English & American Literature (2006) Accounting & Finance (2006) Chemistry (2007) French Studies with Italian (2007) Early Childhood Studies (2007)

A2 grades required by some universities

AAA	Cambridge
	Oxford
	Imperial
	LSE
	UCL
BBB	York
	Birmingham
	Bath
	Manchester
CCC	Goldsmiths'
	Brunel
	Aberystwyth
	Bradford
DDD	Teesside
	Wolverhampton
	London Guildhall
EEE	Thames Valley
	Luton
	North London

UCAS tariff

Grade	A2	AS	BTEC: Certificate
A	120	60	Distinction: $2 \times 120 = 240$
B	100	50	
C	80	40	Merit: $2 \times 80 = 160$
D	60	30	
E	40	20	Pass: $2 \times 40 = 80$

UCAS: PERSONAL STATEMENT ADVICE

- Why is it important I write a good one?
 - this is your first and possibly only chance to sell your skills & abilities
 - as more & more well-qualified applicants vie for HE places so fewer & fewer get interviewed
 - an admissions tutor may only spend **30 seconds** reading it (esp if it arrives late)

So it must be **LITERATE** (well-spelt & punctuated, and in continuous prose- **NOT** bullet points) and **LEGIBLE** (word-processed in 12pt Times New Roman is the norm). Tutors will evaluate your compositional skills on the basis of this!

- In every paragraph:
 - think about the impression you want to give
 - demonstrate that you have had the initiative to gain new skills
 - explain how this has changed & developed you
- Universities are interested in Key Skills whether or not you have formal qualifications in them; useful phrases to include which show that you are gaining these skills include:
 - improving own learning
 - organisational ability
 - welcoming new challenges
 - problem-solving
 - working with others, whether in school or the community or at work
 - IT skills

Convert facts into selling points- don't simply describe, show the benefit you've gained

- Which of these pairs is the more impressive statement?

"I enjoy A level Art"

or

"During my Art A level course I have become very interested in the Impressionists: this led to my visiting the exhibition at the Royal Academy during the holiday where I was able to study his technique first-hand"

"I have a Saturday job"

or

"I have a Saturday job in a supermarket where my responsibilities include sorting stock, dealing with customers and handling money. I have gained considerable confidence from this."

"I like going to the theatre"

or

"In a recent production of 'Blood Brothers' I helped with lighting and sound: this helped me learn new technical skills as well as the importance of reliability and organisation"

❑ So what should I say in it?

There is no set way of doing it but the following format is at least logical and meets the criteria admissions tutors tell us they want you to meet: -

Paragraph 1: Academic

- ❑ highlight your motivation for, curiosity in, and enthusiastic commitment to your chosen course
- ❑ what you are doing at school & elsewhere in your subject interest
- ❑ if applying for a non-A level subject (like psychology, law etc) what are you reading or doing to show commitment to it
- ❑ how your 6th form studies have influenced your choice of course
- ❑ any project or achievement you're particularly proud of
- ❑ specific books, debates or activities you most enjoyed

Paragraph 2: , Career plans, work experience etc

- ❑ what you intend to do with the qualification- but don't be too set in your ways
- ❑ any relevant work experience - this can tell a lot about:-
 - reliability & ambition
 - teamwork & communication skills
- ❑ if applicable, reasons for a gap year & your intentions

Paragraph 3/4: Extra-curricular, at school & elsewhere

Try and show what makes you stand out but make everything relevant to your proposed course. Be brief but positive about:-

- ❑ positions of responsibility (within the School or House), charity work etc
- ❑ sporting & cultural interests and achievements
- ❑ recreational interests & travel experiences

NB what you have done is less important than what you have gained from it

REMEMBER: DO NOT PUT

- ❑ "I like reading" without specifying what
- ❑ "I like socialising"; tutors are looking for students not party animals

UCAS applications; GCSE, AS & A2 Examining Boards for university entrance in 2010

SUBJECT	GCSE 2008- <u>ONLY</u> for those who sat their GCSEs at Colston's	AS 2009- applies to <u>ALL</u> of you	A2 2010- applies to <u>ALL</u> of you
Art & Design	AQA	OCR	OCR
Biology	AQA	AQA	AQA
Business Studies	n/a	AQA	AQA
Chemistry	AQA	EDEXCEL	EDEXCEL
Citizenship (<u>half</u> GCSE)	AQA	n/a	n/a
Design Technology	OCR	n/a	n/a
Science: Core & Additional	AQA	n/a	n/a
English Literature	AQA	AQA	AQA
English Language	AQA	n/a	n/a
French	OCR	AQA	AQA
Geography	AQA	AQA	AQA
German	OCR	AQA	AQA
History	AQA	OCR	OCR
Mathematics	EDEXCEL	EDEXCEL	EDEXCEL
Further Maths	n/a	EDEXCEL	EDEXCEL
Music	AQA	EDEXCEL	EDEXCEL
Philosophy	n/a	AQA	AQA
Physics	AQA	EDEXCEL	EDEXCEL
Psychology	n/a	AQA	AQA
Religious Studies	EDEXCEL (short & full course)	n/a	n/a
Spanish	OCR	AQA	AQA
Sports Studies/ PE	AQA	AQA	AQA
Theatre Studies	AQA	AQA	AQA

Work Experience for your UCAS Personal Statement

Why?

- ❑ admissions tutors will see that you have more than a vague thought of doing something
- ❑ you will also gain valuable experience in team-work, time-management etc

Advertising/Sales/Marketing/Market Research/Retailing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work experience in a shop/dept store • shadow a manager • temp work as market researcher
Archaeology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voluntary work at a dig • visit museums
Architecture/Landscape Architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with local or council architects • work with construction companies • investigate housing/shopping complexes
Computing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with a computing company • familiarise yourself with the Internet • design games/web pages
Dentistry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shadow your own dentist • visit a dental hospital • learn First Aid
Engineering/Physics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research Neighbourhood Engineers Scheme • attend taster course at university
Environmental Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voluntary work with British Trust for Conservation Volunteers/National Trust
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visit stock exchange • work experience with a bank/building soc./accountant etc
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work experience as a guide at local monument/museum • join local historical society • go on archaeological digs
Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attend local courts of justice / Police open days • shadow solicitors, barristers etc • work exp. in legal dept of large company
Leisure/Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voluntary work at sport centre
Marine Engineering etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn First Aid & Life-Saving

Land-based industries(Agriculture, Forestry etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help on local farms/nurseries • go on a farm activity holiday • learn First Aid
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attend Industry Days/management courses etc • do Duke of Edinburgh's Award/Outward Bound • shadow a company director
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tour local newspaper offices / TV station etc • work for school magazine
Medicine/ Ophthalmics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voluntary work in a hospital • shadow family doctor/optician • learn First Aid
Pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work experience in a chemist's shop • shadow hospital/industrial pharmacist
Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attend local council meetings • shadow an MP • visit Houses of Parliament
Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shadow a psychologist
Social Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work for Community Service Volunteers • Duke of Edinburgh Award
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assist in local primary school • help in Youth Club/Sunday School
Town Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attend planning enquiries • work experience with local council
Vet Science etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work experience in vet practice / kennels / stables etc • visit an abattoir • voluntary work for animal welfare organisation

Anything else?

- ❑ research in the Careers Room
- ❑ research at your local library & read a textbook on the subject

OPEN DAYS AT UNIVERSITIES

Having attended the day at Birmingham University, it is vital you keep the momentum going by carefully reading prospectuses & websites of universities you're interested in. Then visit some universities which look promising *on paper* (accompanying friends/ parents will be welcome). **Beware overdoing it:** there's no point in missing so many days from school that your grades suffer and hence you fail to meet a university's entrance requirements. If there's no date for an Open Day on a college's UCAS web-site, try www.opendays.co.uk. You can even ring a college, talk to the admissions tutor and arrange to visit privately.

So, **having got permission from the school to go**, (by filling in the application form in the red folder kept in the Library) what should I find out about?

1. The course & the department

- what are the teaching methods (tutorials, seminars, lectures etc)
- what are the methods of assessment (modular or linear)
- what is the workload (attending lectures, producing assignments etc)
- what are the entry requirements (is an interview involved?)
- what is the department's reputation (see "The Times" for Quality Ratings or QAA web-sites)
- what are the graduate statistics like for career destinations
- what is their attitude to deferred entry/GAP years

2. The university generally

- ❑ what size and type of campus is it (city centre/ country etc) & what is the cost of living
- ❑ what are its departmental facilities like (this is most important for science & technology courses)
- ❑ what is the accommodation provision like (are you guaranteed a place in a Hall in your first year? can you see an example?) Check www.bunk.com for what's available
- ❑ what will travelling to & from the college be like (and to and from home)
- ❑ what are the Union & leisure/sporting facilities like- & what's on offer in the general area
- ❑ what student support systems are available (finance, careers etc)

So,

- ❑ if the course is what you are looking for
- ❑ if the university made you feel welcome
- ❑ if the undergraduates already there like the place (they often produce unofficial student prospectuses- well worth a read alongside the officially-produced institution prospectus)
- ❑ and if you can see yourself enjoying this environment...

...what are you waiting for?

Interviews advice: A Tale of Two Candidates

Advice on how to survive that dreaded interview

Candidate A	Candidate B
☺	☹
arrives early and composes him/herself	arrives late and flustered
has made an effort to look smart	hasn't
shakes hands firmly	offers a reluctant, flabby handshake
looks the interviewer in the eye & maintains good body language, showing interest in what is said	avoids eye contact, looks around the room, sits back with arms folded etc
has researched into the college & the course	has only glanced at the prospectus
sees the interview as an opportunity	sees the interview as an ordeal
is keen to make a contribution: as the Americans say, "Participate, don't spectate"	makes no independent contributions
speaks energetically & shows a lively interest in the world around him/her	grunts in monosyllables
has re-read his/her Personal Statement and can elaborate on claims made in it about books read etc p	can't remember what was in it and only vaguely remembers books read-if at all
knows something about current affairs, specially if relevant to A level subject areas	doesn't read the papers
when challenged, argues a point of view but will admit error and think again	goes all defensive and seems incapable of thinking on his/her feet
if asked something difficult gets as far as possible, showing grasp of some basic principles	says, " I don't know"
has thought of some questions to ask about the course etc - and asks them	can't think of anything to ask
says 'goodbye' & 'thank you' at the end	can't wait to get out and rushes away

Which candidate would you choose?

Which candidate will you come over as?

Gap Year advice

Who takes one?

- 35% of students from independent & 15% from maintained schools: i.e. 30,000+ in 2008. That's roughly one in ten - and the proportion is rising 3% a year

What do UCAS & the universities think?

- the head of UCAS believes voluntary work is worth an A level grade or two in an admissions tutor's eyes. He also says make sure it is a gap year and not a 'year off' - which impresses no-one
- as for the universities themselves, the picture varies. 93% of university vice-chancellors say they welcome it *if it is purposeful & well organised*, because they benefit from having students with more maturity and experience, though Maths & science departments are less keen than others as they think you might "go off the boil". Read what they say in their prospectus and then check directly with the department you are thinking of applying to. At Bristol University, for example, all departments are happy about a Gap Year - except History, for some strange reason.
- it is a good idea to write a sentence or two in your Personal Statement on your UCAS form about your plans. The more detailed the plans the more impressed they will be
- most colleges will hold a place for you if you later on ask for deferred entry *as long as you are doing something they consider worthwhile*; a few will ask you to re-apply. In the past, Oxbridge have not been too keen but this is changing
- there is now a lot of evidence suggesting that those taking a Gap Year are far less likely to drop out from their course than those who go straight from school to college (where the drop-out rate can reach 40% for some courses and universities)

What do employers think of a Gap Year?

- 65% of employers of graduates advise in favour, especially if you;
 - gain relevant work experience in an industry you are contemplating a career in (the Year in Industry scheme is particularly highly-regarded)
 - demonstrate some business awareness
 - develop
 - ◆ better leadership and team-work skills (i.e. working with others)
 - ◆ better inter-personal and communication skills

- ♦ a sense of responsibility and citizenship
- learn a foreign language

So what are the benefits to me of a Gap Year?

- ❑ you may get a better grasp of your strengths & weaknesses, and thus help resolve uncertainties you have about which degree course or career to choose
- ❑ it will certainly give you something to talk confidently about in interviews!
- ❑ increased maturity & self-reliance may help you adjust more easily to university life so you gain more from it
- ❑ it is an unprecedented opportunity (for 15 months in effect, from the end of A levels to the start of a university degree course) for extended travel- which will never be as cheap again as it is when you qualify for all those lovely discount travel schemes, and you will gain a broader, international outlook on life
- ❑ it is a chance to gain some new work-related & interpersonal skills
- ❑ it is a chance to save some money before the inevitable poverty of student life
- ❑ it will give you good experience in managing your time & money
- ❑ you may gain course-related experience: hone your language skills; gain practical experience of industry, the law, social services etc
- ❑ others may benefit from your skills if you do volunteer work in the UK or abroad

Fine, but what is the downside?

- ❑ you may decide to give up your college place as you can't stand the thought of being a student again. Actually this phenomenon is relatively rare as over 90% go on to study the course they had originally selected. In fact the number of independent school students who drop out from university falls from 12% to 1% after a Gap Year
- ❑ the time factor: if you intend to read medicine, vet science, law, architecture etc you will be doing a longer degree course anyway; adding another year onto it may not be a good idea
- ❑ there may be a break in the continuity of your knowledge (esp. for science & Maths students)
- ❑ you may have good job prospects with your Gap employer and get used to the regular income

Where can I find out more?

- ❑ ask family, friends & the school about contacts who might provide work, accommodation etc
- ❑ consult any of the many books available, esp. *The Gap Year Guidebook*
- ❑ check out the many web-sites, magazine articles etc devoted to *Gap* years

Is there any urgency?

- ❑ yes; the more popular and well-organised schemes soon fill up; competition for places is as fierce as for college places, so apply early. If you leave it too late the first few months may be wasted
- ❑ you do need to plan well ahead to raise the money for the more expensive schemes

Useful web-sites

DfEE helpline	www.open.gov.uk/dfee.dfee-home.htm
National Union of Students	www.nus.org.uk
NUS helpline	www.nusonline.co.uk
NUS info on universities	www.nus.ac.uk
UCAS	www.ucas.com
UCAS's teen-friendly website	www.studentuk.com
UCAS; Student info	www.studentuk.com/opendays
UCAN magazine	www.youcan.co.uk
Teaching quality	www.qaa.ac.uk
Research quality	www.rae.ac.uk
Unistats	www.unistats.com
Open Days	www.opendays.co.uk
University accommodation	www.bunk.com
Links to HE sites	www.push.co.uk www.scit.wlv.ac.uk/ukinfo/uk.map.html
Worldwide university links	www.braintrack.com
Graduate careers	www.prospects.csu.ac.uk
Scholarships etc	www.scholarship-search.org.uk
<u>Newspapers, TV</u>	
The Guardian's HE site	www.educationguardian.co.uk/universityguide
The Independent's HE site	www.independent.co.uk/ucas
The Times (league tables)	www.the-times.co.uk/gug
BBC Education	www.bbc.uk/education/choice
BBC; AS Guru	www.bbc.co.uk/asguru

Gap years

Gap Year Company	www.gapyear.co.uk
Gap Year magazine	www.gapyear.com
Gap Activity Projects	www.gap.org.uk
Info Youth	www.infoyouth.com
Oundle School; Gap Years	www.argonet.co.uk/users/oundlesch/abroa.html
World Challenge Expeditions	www.gap-challenge.co.uk
The Year Out Group	www.yearout.org
Community Service Volunteers	www.csv.org.uk
Worldwide Volunteers	www.worldwidevolunteering.org.uk
BUNAC	www.bunac.org.uk/
Council on International Educational Exchange	www.ciee.org/europe/ukweb/uk.htm
Year in Industry	www.yini.org.uk

Travel etc

Foreign & Commonwealth Office	www.fco.gov.uk/travel
International Student Travel Confederation (ISIC cards)	www.istc.org/
STA (Student Travel)	www.statravel.co.uk
Campus Travel	www.campustravel.co.uk/countries/uk/
Lonely Planet	www.lonelyplanet.com
Rough Guides	www.roughguides.com
Inter-Rail	www.inter-rail.co.uk
International Youth Hostels	www.iyhf.org/
Travel health	www.masta.org
Telephone discounts	www.Studentmobiles.com
Student books	www.studentbookworld.com www.swotbooks.com

GOOD LUCK!