

HIGHER EDUCATION APPLICATIONS: POLICY ON GUIDANCE TO STUDENTS

Last reviewed:	September 2026
Next review due:	September 2027
Reviewed by:	Head of Careers and Higher Education

1. Purpose and principles

d'Overbroeck's prides itself on the quality of the guidance it provides to students in making informed higher education choices and applications, and on supporting students to progress successfully to destinations appropriate to their interests, abilities and aspirations.

The school recognises that higher education is one of a number of possible progression routes available to students following Sixth Form study. Advice about higher education is therefore provided within the school's wider Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) programme and is intended to be impartial, informed and student-centred.

Where a student chooses to apply to university or another higher education provider, the school will provide appropriate guidance and support while ensuring that the application remains the student's own work and responsibility.

The school aims to:

- enable students to make informed choices about courses, institutions and higher education pathways;
- encourage students to take responsibility for researching and managing their own applications;
- provide accurate, current and impartial information about higher education;
- help students understand the academic and other requirements of the courses to which they are applying;
- support students to present their academic achievements, interests, experiences and potential accurately and effectively;
- provide appropriate specialist support for applications with additional requirements;
- maintain the integrity, authenticity and fairness of the application process;
- work constructively with universities, colleges, conservatoires and other higher education providers.

The policy should be read alongside the school's Careers (CEIAG) policy, Safeguarding policy, Equal Opportunities policy, Plagiarism policy and Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy, which are all available from the [school website](#) or from the school office on request.

2. Higher education choices and progression

Applying to university should be understood as one possible progression route following A level study. Students will be supported to consider higher education alongside other appropriate options, including degree apprenticeships and other higher or professional pathways.

Students are expected to make informed choices based on a range of factors. The suitability of a course and institution for the individual student is central to the school's guidance.

Students will be encouraged to consider a sufficiently broad range of options and to make realistic choices in light of their interests, attainment, predicted grades and aspirations.

3. The application process

The majority of students applying to UK universities do so through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Students are expected to familiarise themselves with the UCAS application process and to meet both UCAS deadlines and the school's published internal deadlines. The school will publish internal deadlines and key external dates.

The principal elements of a UCAS undergraduate application include:

- personal information;
- education and examination history;
- employment information where applicable;
- relevant additional activities;
- course and institution choices;
- the UCAS personal statement;
- the school or college reference;
- predicted grades for qualifications that are still to be completed;
- any additional information or supporting documentation required by particular providers or courses.

Students are responsible for checking the specific requirements of every course and institution to which they apply. Requirements may include admissions tests, interviews, portfolios, auditions, written work, supplementary questions or other assessments.

Applications to conservatoires and non-UK universities may operate through different systems and have different requirements and deadlines. Students considering such applications must inform their Director of Studies at an early stage. The school will provide guidance on these processes, but students remain responsible for ensuring that their applications are complete, accurate and submitted by the appropriate deadlines.

4. Guidance on UCAS personal statements

For applications made through UCAS, students complete a personal statement comprising three questions. The total personal statement remains limited to 4,000 characters, including spaces, with a minimum character requirement for each question.

The three questions are:

1. Why do you want to study this course or subject?
2. How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?
3. What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

The purpose of the personal statement is to enable universities/colleges to understand the applicant's motivation for the course, how their academic studies have prepared them for it, and how their wider experiences have contributed to their readiness for higher education and the subject they wish to study.

Students are expected to take primary responsibility for their personal statements and to ensure that all information submitted is accurate and authentic.

The school will provide guidance and support to help students:

- understand the purpose of each question;
- identify relevant academic and wider experiences;
- reflect on their interests, achievements and preparation;
- identify appropriate evidence to support their claims;
- structure and develop their responses;
- review and refine their own writing;
- ensure that their final responses are accurate and authentic.

In providing this support:

- teachers and advisers may offer general advice on content, structure, style and expression;
- subject teachers may help students identify relevant academic experiences, reading, research and other subject-related preparation;
- teachers and advisers should encourage students to reflect on their own experiences and articulate their own motivations and understanding;
- staff should not write a student's responses for them or provide text for submission as if it were the student's own work;
- students remain responsible for ensuring that their submitted responses accurately represent their own experiences, views and achievements;
- students should coordinate advice received from different members of staff, where appropriate, to avoid unnecessary duplication and to ensure that responsibility for the application remains with the student;
- students must comply with UCAS requirements concerning the use of generative artificial intelligence and must not submit AI-generated material as their own where this would misrepresent their authorship.

The level of support provided will be proportionate to individual circumstances and to the requirements of the course or institution to which the student is applying.

The school's role is to help students present their own experiences and achievements effectively, rather than to construct an application on their behalf.

5. References

The school provides a reference for students applying through the school's UCAS centre.

The reference is intended to provide universities/colleges with relevant academic and contextual information about the student. UCAS guidance states that references should be factual, specific and concise.

The Director of Studies has primary responsibility for overseeing the preparation of the school's reference, normally drawing on information and comments provided by relevant subject teachers and other members of staff. The student is unable to view the reference attached to their application and it is not school policy to share the contents of a reference with the student or their families.

The school will ensure that references:

- are accurate and evidence-based;
- provide relevant academic context;
- identify appropriate strengths and areas of potential;
- support the student's application without simply reproducing information contained in the student's personal statement;
- provide relevant contextual or extenuating information where appropriate;
- comply with UCAS requirements;
- do not make inappropriate reference to particular universities or colleges.

Where relevant, the school may provide information about its academic context, curriculum, qualification structure and processes for determining predicted grades. UCAS allows registered centres to include such information within the reference.

Once a UCAS application has been submitted, the school cannot amend the reference or predicted grades through UCAS. Students are therefore expected to engage fully with the school's application process and to raise any relevant factual issues before the application is approved and submitted.

6. Predicted grades

Predicted grades are an important part of the university application process. They are professional judgements about the grades a student is reasonably expected to achieve at the end of their course.

Predicted grades will be determined using appropriate evidence and professional judgement. Evidence may include:

- internal examinations and assessments;
- classwork and coursework where relevant;
- formative assessment;
- performance over time;
- demonstrated academic progress;
- attendance and engagement where relevant to the assessment of likely attainment;
- the student's response to feedback;
- other appropriate academic evidence.

Predicted grades should be:

- evidence-based;
- realistic and achievable;
- consistent with the student's demonstrated academic performance and potential;
- determined independently of the student's preferred university or course;
- reviewed through an appropriate professional process.

The Director of Studies has overall responsibility for determining predicted grades, normally following consultation with the relevant subject teachers.

Predicted grades are not a matter for negotiation between students, parents and teachers. A student or parent may ask for clarification of the process and the evidence considered and may provide relevant information that the school should take into account. However, predicted grades will not be increased solely because a particular university or course has a higher entry requirement.

The school will seek to ensure that predicted grades are available sufficiently early to enable students to make realistic and informed choices.

7. Admissions tests, interviews and other selection processes

Some universities and courses use additional selection processes, which may include admissions tests, interviews, multiple mini-interviews, written assessments, portfolios or auditions.

Students are responsible for researching the requirements of their chosen courses and for meeting any relevant registration or application deadlines.

The school's role is to provide appropriate preparation and guidance, which may include:

- explaining the nature and format of an assessment;
- providing relevant academic guidance;
- recommending appropriate preparation materials;
- arranging practice tests or interviews;
- providing feedback;
- helping students understand how to approach unfamiliar questions or assessment formats;
- signposting students to appropriate external support where necessary.

8. Oxford, Cambridge and specialist professional courses

Applications to Oxford and Cambridge and to courses such as medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine/science will involve earlier deadlines and additional selection requirements.

The school provides specialist support for such applications. Students applying to these courses are expected to take responsibility for their own academic preparation and to engage actively with the guidance provided.

9. Submitted written work, portfolios and other evidence

Some universities and courses require applicants to submit samples of written work, portfolios, practical work or other evidence as part of the admissions process.

Where work is submitted as part of an application:

- the work must be the student's own, subject to any specific requirements of the institution;
- students must comply with the institution's instructions concerning the preparation or adaptation of work;
- staff may provide reasonable guidance and feedback where appropriate;
- staff must not falsely certify the nature or authorship of submitted work;
- students must not ask or pressure staff to provide false certification;
- any attempt to submit work dishonestly or to obtain false certification may be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

These principles apply equally to written work, portfolios, practical work and other materials submitted as part of an admissions process.

10. Academic integrity and the use of artificial intelligence

Students are responsible for ensuring that all information and material submitted as part of an application is accurate and authentic.

Students must comply with the requirements of UCAS and individual universities or colleges concerning plagiarism, authorship and the use of generative artificial intelligence.

The use of artificial intelligence must not result in an application misrepresenting the student's own knowledge, experiences, abilities or written work.

Where AI tools are permitted as part of preparation, students remain responsible for checking the accuracy and appropriateness of any material produced and for ensuring that their final submission complies with the requirements of the relevant application system and provider.

The school will provide guidance on responsible use of AI where appropriate and will update its advice as UCAS and individual universities change their requirements.

11. International, conservatoire and other applications

The school supports students who wish to apply to appropriate higher education institutions outside the standard UK UCAS process.

Applications to international universities, conservatoires and other specialist institutions may have significantly different application processes.

Students must inform their Director of Studies as early as possible where such an application is being considered. The school will provide reasonable guidance and support within its expertise and will signpost students to specialist or external advice where necessary.

Students remain responsible for checking the current requirements of each institution and for ensuring that applications are completed accurately and on time.

12. Roles and responsibilities

12.1 Head of Careers and Higher Education

The Head of Careers and Higher Education will:

- oversee the school's higher education guidance programme;
- provide guidance on university and course research;
- maintain current information and resources relating to applications;
- coordinate the UCAS process within the school;
- provide guidance to students, staff and parents;
- coordinate specialist support where appropriate;
- monitor changes to UCAS and university admissions requirements.

12.2 UCAS Administrator

The Administrator provides administrative support whilst applications are being completed and submitted, and will:

- maintain the school's UCAS portal, set up referees, and ensure that other required information is complete and accurate;
- act as the main administrative point of contact for advice to Directors of Studies throughout the UCAS application process;
- monitor applications regularly and ensure that students and Directors of Studies are aware of outstanding actions, missing information and approaching internal or external deadlines;
- check all applications carefully before submission, including personal details, education history, course choices, predicted grades and supporting information, and ensure that any discrepancies are referred to the appropriate member of staff or student;
- maintain accurate records of applications, submissions, offers and other relevant UCAS outcomes, arrange payment of UCAS invoices, and provide information to the Head of Careers and Higher Education.

12.3 Directors of Studies

Directors of Studies are the principal school-based advisers for individual students' applications. They:

- advise students on university choices and applications;
- coordinate with subject teachers;
- oversee the preparation of the school reference;
- determine predicted grades in consultation with relevant teachers;
- monitor students' progress towards internal and external deadlines;
- support students in making realistic and informed choices.

12.4 Subject teachers

Subject teachers contribute specialist academic guidance, including:

- advice on relevant degree courses;
- advice on academic reading and research;
- guidance on subject-related enrichment;
- advice concerning written work or portfolios where appropriate;
- information to support references and predicted grades.

12.5 Students

Students are expected to:

- take responsibility for researching and managing their applications;
- engage with the guidance and resources provided by the school;
- meet internal and external deadlines;
- check course and institution requirements carefully;
- provide accurate information;
- communicate promptly with relevant staff;
- undertake appropriate independent preparation;
- ensure that all submitted work is their own and complies with relevant requirements;
- inform the school promptly of any additional requirements or applications outside the standard UCAS process.

14. Monitoring and review

The effectiveness of the school's university guidance and application process will be reviewed annually by the Head of Careers and Higher Education in consultation with the Principal, Senior Leadership Team, Directors of Studies and relevant staff.

The policy will be updated as necessary to reflect significant changes to UCAS procedures, university admissions practices or relevant legislation and guidance.

The school's aim is not simply to maximise the number of university offers received, but to ensure that students are supported to make informed, appropriate and successful higher education choices.

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