

Applying to universities in the UK.

Experience has shown that when advising students on the application process to UK universities, many people do not fully appreciate the implications of their choices and therefore do not do the required groundwork to ensure that they get on to the best or most appropriate course that fits their talents and or future needs: students often make decisions lacking insight

and many are often guided by university rankings without really considered the importance of the task at hand. Going to university is a big deal for both students and parents alike; done well it can be the start of the rest of your life, but done poorly it can lead to a miserable and costly experience. With over a hundred universities offering thousands of courses, it is naïve to think that all courses are the same. All but [one](#) of the universities in the UK are government universities, and the courses are regularly audited by the [QAA](#) to ensure the quality of the taught courses. Research is also assessed on a regular basis through the [RAE](#) exercise, the last of which was completed in 2008. With a wealth of information, it is important to conduct research on the subject areas that you are interested in and explore the courses on offer and the potential careers these can lead to. The universities in the UK offer a huge variety of academic and vocational courses – one is not better than the other, they are just different and can offer diverse transferable skills that will prepare students for their future. It is up to the student to find the university that offers the best fit for them.



Why apply to the UK

UK universities are respected and valued throughout the [world](#) for the academic quality and cultivation of innovative thinking that has led to a number of [innovations](#) and discoveries that have changed the world. UK universities have produced a huge number of scientists, engineers, writers and thinkers. Did you know that the [atom](#) was 1st split in the UK, which in turn led to the Manhattan project, or that [DNA](#) was discovered at Cambridge, but the application of DNA ([DNA fingerprinting](#)) to help in forensic science was pioneered at Leicester University in 1986? The first [electronic computer](#) to run a programme back in 1948 was developed at Manchester University, which finally led to the internet which was developed by an [Oxford graduate](#) at CERN in 1991. Just from this small sampling, it is clear to see that UK universities train and develop students to think creatively and it is these traits that make education in the UK so valuable. With a proven track record, a UK qualification lets employers know that you can make a real contribution to their company or organization.

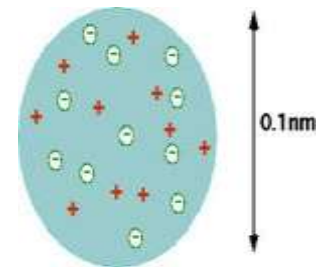


Figure 1 Rutherford's Atomic Model



Figure 2 DNA

In addition to a world class education, the “International Pricing Study” conducted by the UK HE International Unit shows that UK education also offers unparalleled value for money and with tuition fees cheaper than both the USA and Australia and undergraduate degrees are a minimum of 4 years. UK degrees are 3 years long (4 years in Scotland), thus offering savings on tuition and accommodation fees as well as allowing students

to enter the work place to develop their career quicker and apply what they have learned. The following shows current fees (correct at the end of August 2011).

- Classroom based courses: £9,500 — £13,700
- Laboratory or Workshop based courses: £10,500— £17,000
- Clinical Medicine/Dentistry: £23,800 — £30,900

Accommodation varies around the country, but accommodation in London is much more expensive than the rest of the UK, and must be taken into consideration.

- Catered or self-catered: you may choose to cook for yourself or you may prefer to have that hassle taken care of by someone else
- Shared bathroom or en-suite: a shared bathroom room is a much cheaper option
- London is more expensive: £120 to £250 per week
- Outside of London: average rent around £72 per week

Different kinds of Universities

The UK offers a vast range of courses ranging from foundation courses through to doctoral research at a wide variety of universities. Even though all UK universities offer excellent education, they approach their goals in different ways. Some universities are more research intensive while others concentrate primarily on teaching.

Research led institutions

There are two main groups that cover the research universities, these are:

- [The Russell Group](#)
- [The 1994 Group](#)





One group is not better than the other – the Russell group of Universities are simply larger and therefore have more areas of research that overlap and so often collaborate with each other to help further the understanding of a field. The 1994 group of universities, being smaller, generally tend to be more specialized thus leading to members sharing research and working closely together.

The new universities, (1992 Universities) also conduct research, but their main goal is to teach students and they do this very well. The new universities generally tend to focus more on vocational and technical programmes that lead to specific careers within given fields. Many academics teaching at new universities have often had industrial or business experience and can help students to develop industry links and also get on to internship programmes. Due to the nature of the universities, new universities often offer more contact hours to their students and nurture them and help them to get a foothold into their chosen industry. The new universities excel at teaching programmes such as Accounting, Business and Management, Art and Design, Fashion Management and Shoe Design and will often have in house specialists. For example, you



can be taught by [Jimmy Choo](#), the world renowned shoe designer at DeMontfort University or work on projects set up by [Sir Paul Smith](#) at Nottingham Trent University.



With a huge variety of courses available at over 100 universities, it is important to take the time to determine the best courses for you and the kind of university that you would do best at. The

UCAS website has been set up to help students, but is very comprehensive and can be a little overwhelming, so it is important to be focused. Students can do this by reflecting on the subjects that they are studying, and the courses that they enjoy. A degree is a very specialized programme, so students should be focused and so should be looking at courses that they really enjoy. Ideally students should be considering what they want to study at university at least two years in advance and research the subject areas to see if there are extra exams they need to complete (more on this later). If students are unsure of what they want to do, they can complete either the [Stamford](#) test or the more detailed [centigrade](#) test.

Having thought about the kinds of courses available, it is important to research the entrance requirements through [UCAS course search](#) and compare the grades needed to get on to the course in light of what you are expected to get in your diploma. It is important to be realistic as students can only apply for 5 courses through the UCAS system. UK universities are self selecting, students expecting to score around 30 in their IB should not be looking at Oxford or Cambridge, as this will be a waste of one of the 5 applications students can do. The best way to complete the UCAS is to choose a place that you think you can get into in terms of grades, and then look at courses with slightly lower grades (maybe 1 or 2 points lower than your top choice) to ensure that you can get offers and also have a realistic chance of getting into your choices.

Oxbridge

To apply for Oxbridge, students should realistically be expecting to get stellar grades, and even then there is no plan along with the application questionnaire enough, lead to the is the most important it is important to be well of all students that make rejected. The interview



guarantee. The study supplementary [\(SAQ\)](#) will, if good interview. The interview part of the process and prepared for this – half it to the interview get serves two purposes:

1. To see if the potential tutor likes you – personal tutors take on 7 – 10 students per year and will teach them until they graduate
2. To see if the student is able to handle the work load? Oxford and Cambridge, unlike other universities, have shorter terms and the students have a greater work load. Students will be expected to complete 50 hours of self study per week – for example, an English literature student would be expected to read four classic novels per week and be able to discuss in depth!

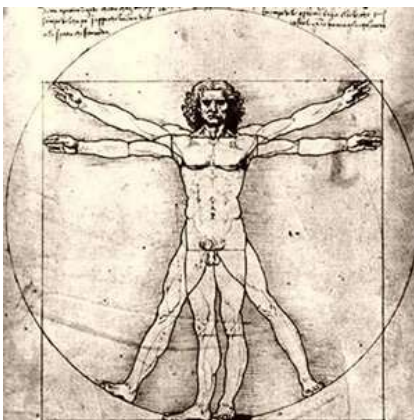
The professor will be looking to see if the student shows outstanding ability and a unique insight into their chosen subject; this needs to go beyond what has been studied in I.B. It is



recommended that students read at least 10 books around their subject to show a passion for their studies. The professor will be looking at how you answer questions, how much thought has been put into them and how you will react to ideas, general guidance and working as part of a team. It is a good idea to try and practice the interviews with someone that has a degree in the subject that you are interested in.

Medicine

Medicine is a hugely popular subject, but there are only 7.5% of places available for



international students as the fees are subsidized by the NHS (National Health Service). For medicine, students must study chemistry, and for dentistry they need to study biology and a combination of other sciences or maths. Students can only apply for four medical programmes because of the high rate of rejections. If students are interested in applying for medicine, it is imperative that they gain some work experience in a clinic, hospice, old person's home etc... It is not important where you work, it is important to show that you have empathy, can work under pressure and can also deal with people from all walks

of life. Doctors need to be patient and instil confidence in their patients – being incredibly bright is just one of many factors that makes a great doctor.

To apply for medicine, students will be expected to complete either the [UKCAT](#) and score a minimum of 650 out of 900, or the [BMAT](#) and score a minimum of 6 out of 9. Students can only do the test once, but there are practice tests available. Medical students generally do not have problems with the science based questions, but many find the verbal reasoning particularly difficult.

All potential medical students that have passed the initial screening stage will be invited to attend a medical interview so that the medical school can assess the candidate's character and suitability to the medical profession. When students prepare for the interview, it is important to have a complete understanding of the profession as questions can delve in issues of medical ethics and cover issues such as abortion, to more simple things such as the minimum age someone can be to become a consultant and how to achieve this. Being a doctor is a huge decision as students must be prepared to work long hours, especially in their early career, but even when they have passed all exams, people who have chosen medicine as their vocation must be prepared for a career of life-long learning in order to keep up with advances in medicine.

Law



Law is a hugely popular subject and a number of universities now require students to complete the [LNAT](#) test. A competitive score is 18 out of 40.

As stated earlier, it is imperative that students consider what they want to study in advance in order to ensure that they know what is required of them and whether there are additional tests that they need to complete.

Students can take courses to familiarize themselves with the UKCAT / BMAT and the LNAT.

Personal Statement

The personal statement is your chance to market yourself, but will also give the course examiner an insight into what the student is like. In the statement, you can link your skills and experience, but try to be organized and write clearly and in the appropriate register, don't be too formal or familiar. It is important to keep focused so ensure that your sentences are short (12-20 words will suffice). Each sentence should bring a new idea; it should not be increasing the word count as the writing starts to lose focus. Check the grammar and it is also good to get someone to check your work to ensure that there is a point to everything you have written.

Accepting offers

When all universities have made a decision on your application, you will be given a deadline to accept your offers – students should check their UCAS portal on a regular basis. Students can accept 2 offers – they will have a firm choice and an insurance choice. The insurance choice should not have the same point allocation as the firm, if the student does not get the grades from the firm choice, then they should be able to take up their insurance.

When thinking of the course, students should think about the types of universities and location – where is the best place, a campus or city university, and also where is the best place to study?

International fees are going to be largely the same across the board, especially the research led universities, but prices can vary greatly from city to city for accommodation, with London being the most expensive city.

Visas

Students with a European passport are free to go and study in the UK without getting a visa, but all other international students will be issued with a certificate of acceptance of study ([CAS](#)). The CAS locks the student into a university, so when accepting offers, it is important that students choose the right course at the right [university](#).

For further details you can contact:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/taiwan.htm>

<http://www.ukcas.com.tw>