

February 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians

We know many parents are keen to know more about the preparation that their son or daughter needs to do this year to strengthen their application to Oxbridge and/or to study Medicine, Veterinary Science, Dentistry or Law. This letter aims to give advice and resources to help you understand the process and support your son or daughter.

If your daughter/son is not interested in these professions, you may still find the section on work experience, wider reading and lunchtime seminars informative, the same messages apply to all students applying to university and anyone can attend the lunchtime seminars, go on work experience and do wider reading. We will be sending out a letter later on in the year, which is specifically about work experience.

All applications are through the UCAS system and for highly competitive courses there is a general expectation that

- students will be able to discuss and be curious about issues in their field of study. This can be achieved through wider reading and attending lectures relevant to the discipline.
- students undertake some work experience so they can talk enthusiastically about their observations, things they have learnt and demonstrate their keen interest in a particular area of study.
- for Oxbridge and other top Russell group universities, students need to take an entrance exam, which is normally in the autumn term of year 13.

A level grades are the most important criteria for entry, so your son or daughter needs to work steadily throughout year 12 and 13, submitting home learning, revising for assessments and taking on board feedback from teachers. UCAS predicated grades are based on the progress your son/daughter makes in year 12 and the PPEs at the end of the summer term are an important indicator of the grades they will achieve at A level. Essentially we want our students to adopt the A level Mindset that we explained at the information evening so that they do achieve their very best. The slides can be found on FROG by following this link:

[file:///C:/Users/cls/Downloads/Year_12_Parents_Info_evening_Parent_Version_2019.pptx%20\(4\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/cls/Downloads/Year_12_Parents_Info_evening_Parent_Version_2019.pptx%20(4).pdf)

In addition, your son/daughter should consider the following suggestions to strengthen their UCAS application.

Lunchtime Seminars

Mrs Hart, our Careers Lead, invites professionals to speak about their area of work, how they progressed in their career and the session finishes off with questions and answers. Last year we had inspirational speakers from the Royal Navy, RIBA, PwC as well as a GP, a nurse, a midwife and Oxbridge graduates – often ex-students.

These are advertised on daily briefing, on the noticeboard in the study room in the sixth form and the noticeboard above the photocopier in the sixth form centre. The programme for this year is attached and as you will see there are many dates to be confirmed as our speakers are busy and we have to fit in with their diaries. Mrs Hart also holds a mailing list of students interested in particular fields of study or

areas so it would be advisable for your son or daughter to email Mrs Hart to share their plans for post 18.

Medics Society

Sixth form students interested in medicine or medical related courses are welcome to attend the Medics Society held on Friday lunchtime Week A in the senior library. Students discuss the application process but also the latest developments in the field of medicine as well as current affairs issues relating to the medical profession. Students lead the society.

Wider Reading

This means students reading beyond their A level textbooks. Their subject teachers will be able to give them wider reading lists. The New Scientist and The Economist are held in the library and your son/daughter needs to keep up to date with current affairs by reading a quality newspaper. All can be subscribed to online and newspaper Apps make them very accessible. The BBC News and Channel 4 News websites are excellent and any current affairs programmes such as question time are always good to watch, whatever profession your son/daughter would like to follow. Radio 4 has a wealth of programmes on health, documentaries, ethics and philosophy that are relevant to all the professions <https://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4>. The programmes are all on podcasts so are available at any time. It is so easy for students to go beyond their textbooks with the internet!

Here are some links to University of Oxford sites, they both include a range of topics.

<https://explore.org/>

<http://staircase12.univ.ox.ac.uk/>

Wider reading is about developing a deeper understanding for the subjects, having a critical awareness of the issues. Universities want students to think logically and laterally about their subject, to analyse challenging new ideas and be confident so that they can demonstrate their subject motivation, personality and the crucially to show they want to learn more and will enjoy the challenge. University admissions tutors want to recruit students genuinely interested in their subject, as they will be the most interesting to teach!

Conferences and links with Oxbridge

The Holt has links with University College, Oxford and Kings College, Cambridge and they offer us advice and guidance on the admissions process.

Wellington College also run a programme to support students who want to apply to Oxbridge and the top Russell group universities. There are a number of events during the year and students will be emailed the details on how to apply as they become available. Wellington College also run a lecture programme during the year, with outside speakers visiting the College. We are often sent details of lectures if there are vacancies at the lectures. These opportunities are emailed to all students so a prompt response to attend will be necessary.

There is also a shadowing scheme, which targets prospective students from schools or families with little or no history of applying to top universities.

https://www.applytocambridge.com/shadowing/apply/?mc_cid=ebb61e1e25&mc_eid=cc0fd5ddf1

School run a trip to the Oxbridge conference at Epsom racecourse in the Spring term. We will send out information nearer the time.

Admissions Tests

Applicants normally do pre interview admissions tests in the autumn term of year 13. They are similar to interviews in that they are designed to test how students respond to difficult problems they have not seen before. They are about analysis rather than factual knowledge. We will give advice and support in

completing the tests in the summer of year 12. Practice will be invaluable, particularly with exams like the LNAT or the TSA, where large sections of reading and/or multiple choice can be difficult to fit into the time. However, we strongly advise that Year 12 students focus on their A levels, wider reading, enrichment activities and only start to prepare for the admissions tests after their Year 12 PPEs in the summer. The PPEs in the summer form an important part in the UCAS predicted grades. This link takes you to the UCAS website that explains all the different tests

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/entry-requirements/admissions-tests>

These links also give more information - websites for Oxford and Cambridge

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/tests?wssl=1>

<http://www.admissionstesting.org/for-test-takers/cambridge-pre-interview-assessments/>

Wellington College offer our students some guidance on sitting the admissions tests, which we will pass on to students when we receive more information later on in the year.

Work Experience

Mrs Sharon Hart, Careers Lead, is more than willing to help students find work experience opportunities. Often voluntary work with children and the elderly means that students have to apply for a DBS certificate. This can take a few weeks to be processed so it is vital your son/daughter starts to apply to work experience places as soon as possible. We recommend any regular voluntary work in an old people's home, special school, Me2 club for disabled children, working with the homeless, working in foodbanks as invaluable and shows loyalty, commitment, ability to empathise as well as learning more about suffering, stoicism and how the profession that your son/daughter can make a difference to improving the lives of others. These experiences cannot be learnt from a book. Mrs Hart has contacts at Kennet Court, West Drake Memory Centre, Reading Walk In Clinic and she is always supportive in helping sixth formers find their own placements. She will offer advice on what to include in an email or what to say on the phone as well as how to follow up. These are all vital skills for our students to learn; it is important they are as independent as possible in finding their placements with Mrs Hart guiding them in the background!

Interestingly, in the medical and veterinary science fields, manual dexterity is important. Students in the past have strengthened their applications by attending jewellery making classes, needlework sessions and henna painting at local community centres, South Hill Park and local FE colleges. For students wishing to study law or humanities based subjects joining the debating society at school would be invaluable as well as visiting the Reading crown court open days, in addition to any work experience.

Mrs Whitehouse is our coordinator for Oxbridge, Medicine, Veterinary Science and Dentistry. She has successfully supported students through the admissions process to gain places at Oxbridge and other top universities.

Students who are interested in applying to Oxbridge and/or for Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science should contact Mrs Whitehouse and Mrs Hart so they have an up to date mailing list. However, anyone can speak to Mrs Hart about work experience and their tutors are also experienced in the UCAS process.

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If you have any queries about any of the information above, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Whitehouse or Mrs Hart by email. If you need to talk about the progress of your son or daughter in their A level studies or have other concerns please do not hesitate to contact either of us or our sixth form administrator, Jayne Calliss j.calliss@holt.wokingham.sch.uk or on 0118 9780165

Yours sincerely



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