



What makes a good UCAS application?

Ellen Smith, Schools Liaison Officer



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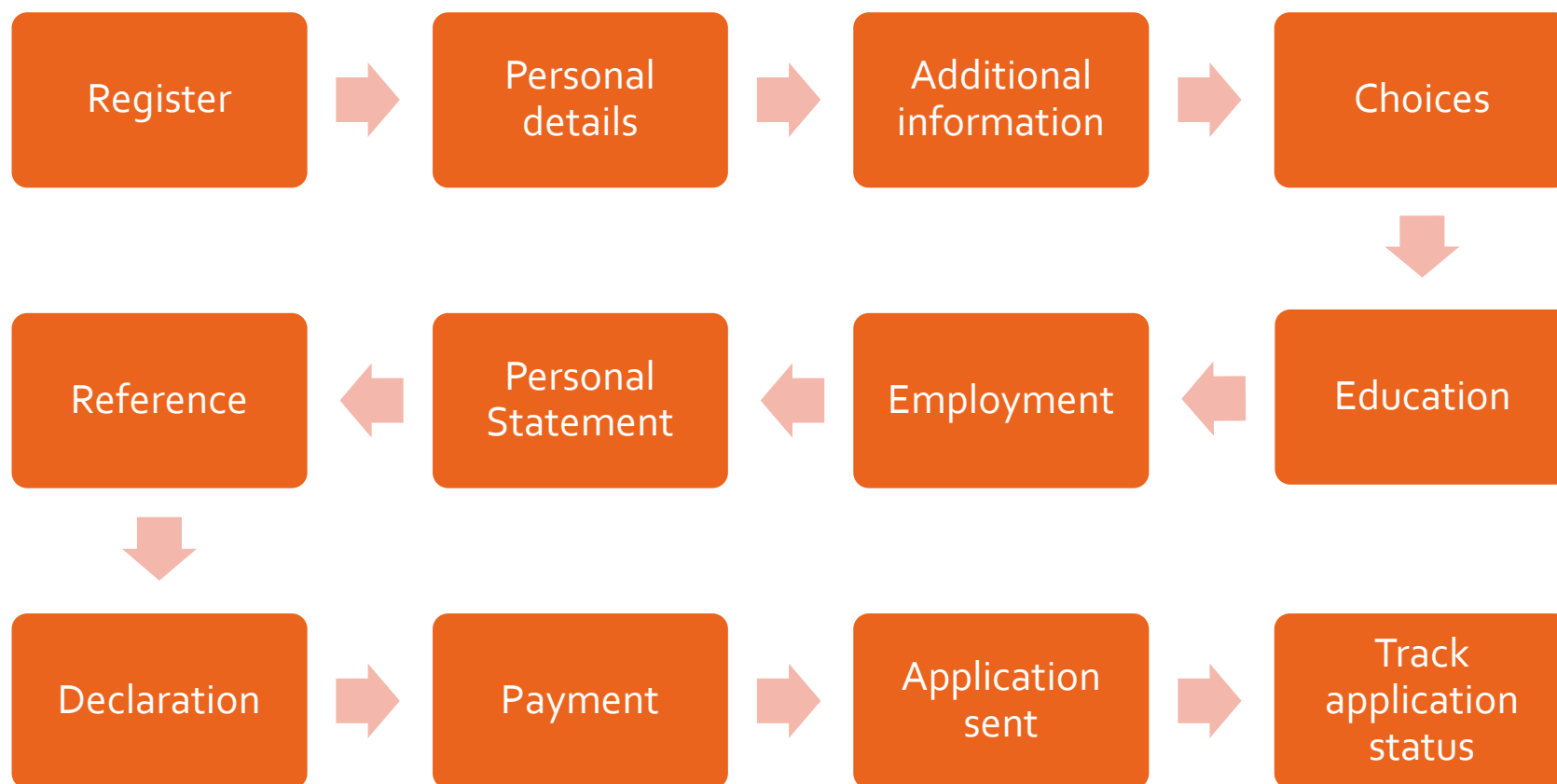


The UCAS process

The UCAS process



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Making the right choice for **you** – key considerations

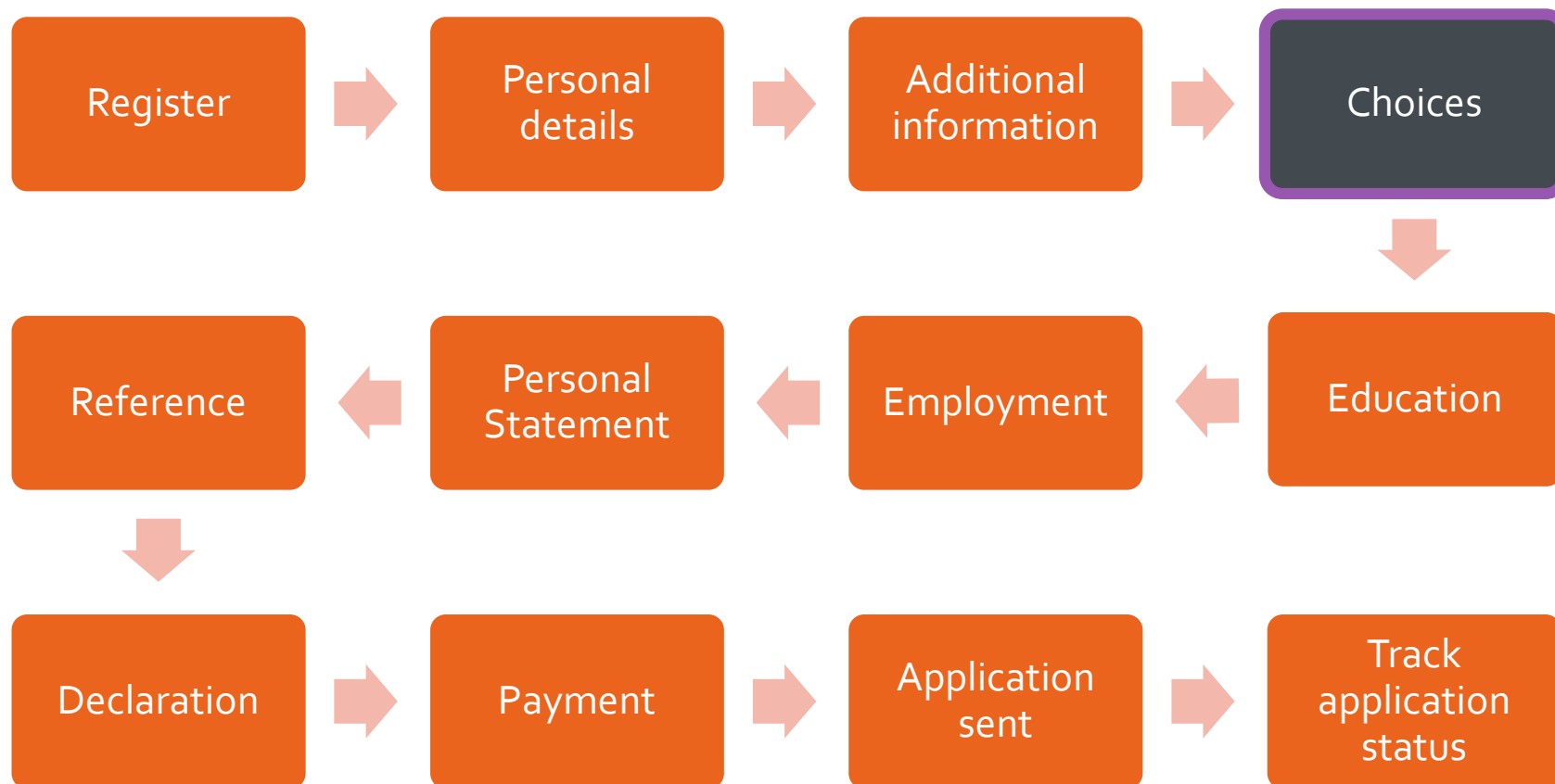
- Why do you want to study further?
- What subject(s) do you want to study?
 - What type of course?
 - Single or joint honours?
 - 3 or 4 years?
 - How would you prefer to be assessed?
 - Opportunities for placements or Study Abroad?
- What grades do you think you may achieve?
 - Be aspirational, but realistic!
- What kind of learning environment would best fit you?
- Where you want to study, do you want to be close to home or further away?



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You can have a maximum of 5 choices with UCAS

These choices can be at 5 individual institutions **or** can include multiple choices at the same institution. EG:

Option 1

1. History at Royal Holloway
2. History at Queen Mary
3. History at Kings College London
4. History at Kingston University
5. History at Brunel University

OR

Option 2

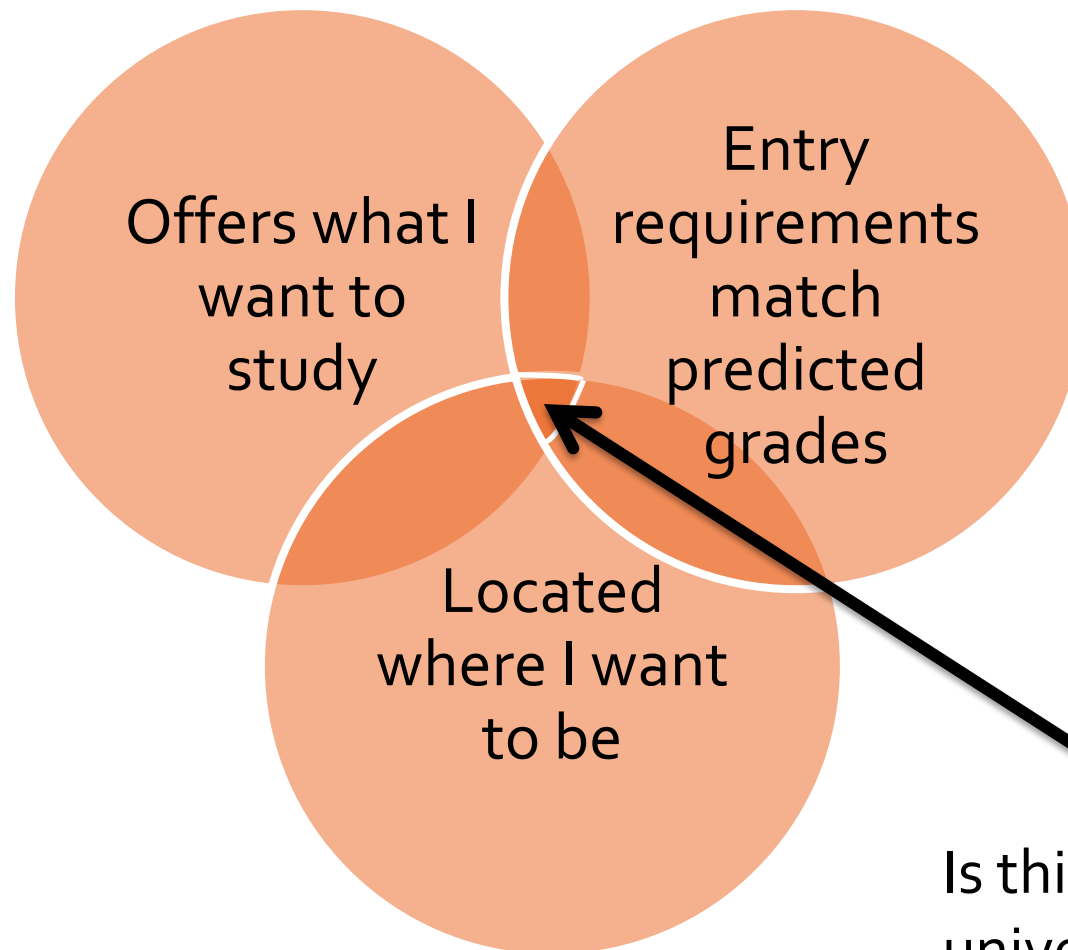
1. History at Royal Holloway
2. Ancient History at Royal Holloway
3. Classics at Royal Holloway
4. History at Queen Mary
5. History at Kings College London

However, you only get **one personal statement** so try to keep courses the same or at least very similar - you'll need to explain why you are passionate about that subject!

Think carefully



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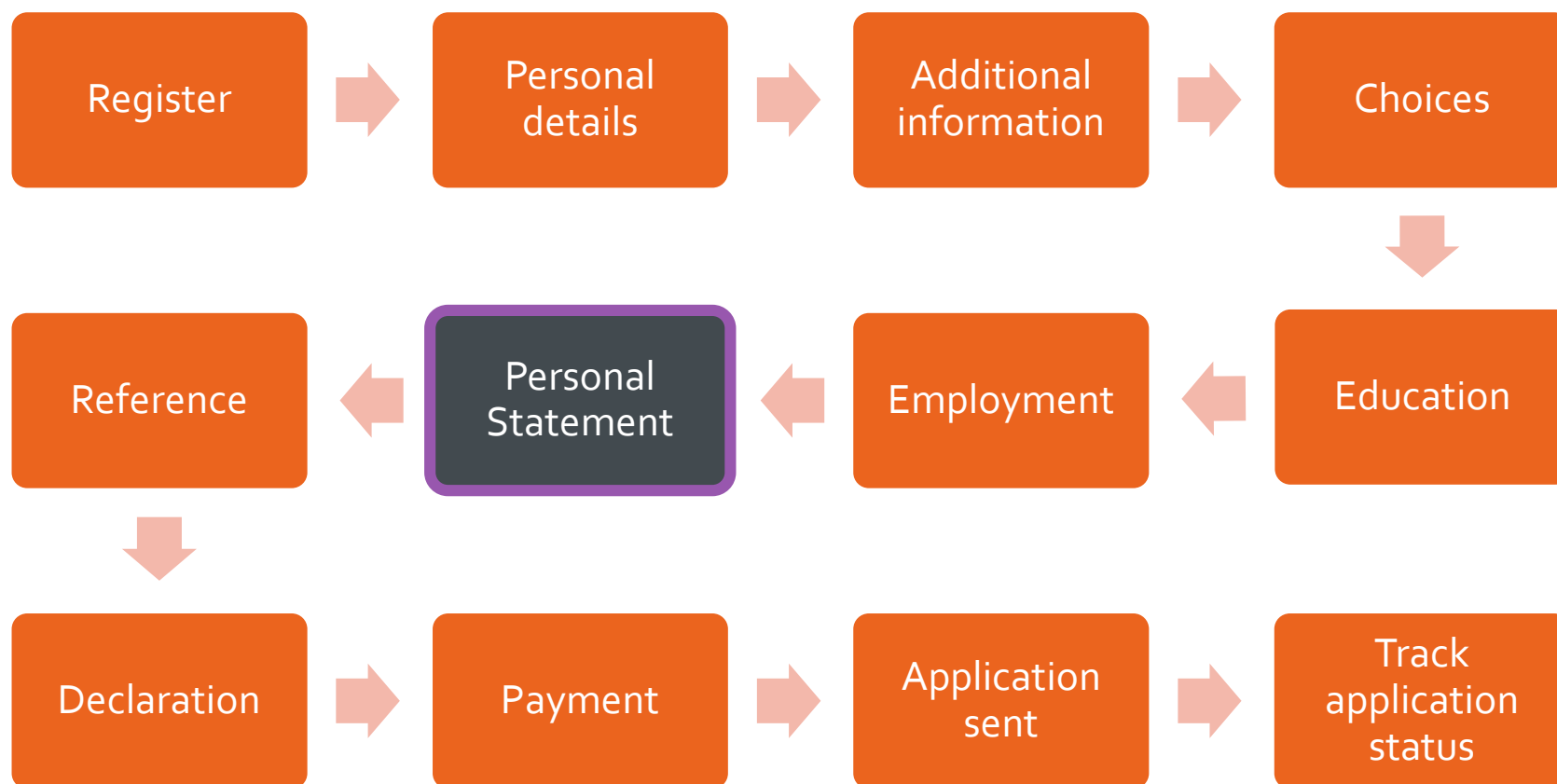


Is this the perfect
university for you?

The UCAS process



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What are Admissions Tutors looking for?

Admission Tutors use UCAS forms to help us identify students who will be successful University students

Why?

- Keen and successful students are great to teach!
- Pride in producing high-achieving undergraduates!
- Successful students are highly employable

Therefore your personal statement is your way of showing why you will be successful on the course that you apply to

Getting into the mind of the admissions tutor

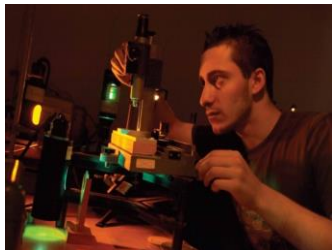
What makes a successful undergraduate?

A large amount of University study is about independent study

Consequently, successful students are:

- Enthusiastic/passionate about their subject
- Committed and dedicated students
- Academically talented (assessed outside of personal statement)

Therefore, your statement should aim to highlight that you have those attributes, that you are the right person for the course and that you're going to stick with it



Personal Statements

Before you start...



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Before anything else make sure you know:

1. Why you want to study further
2. What subject you want to study
3. Why you want to study that subject

You only get one personal statement, so make sure it counts!

The aim of a personal statement



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1. To show that you are suited to the course
2. To demonstrate that you are conscientious, hardworking and can stay the length of the course
3. To demonstrate your dedication to the subject and that you have researched it well
4. To show that you will be able to adjust to your new university environment

Finding the balance...



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70%

Academic. Focus on your chosen course

- Why have you chosen this subject?
- What particularly interests you about this subject?
- Where has this interest come from?
- What independent reading or research have you done?

30%

Extra-curricular.

- Relevant work experience
- Subject-related activities
- Career aspirations
- Sports, interests & hobbies

Always reinforce what you say in your statement with relevant examples

Possible structure for a Personal Statement



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Part 1

- **Introduction**
- Why are you interested in this course? Why do you want to study it at degree level?

Part 2

- **Discuss your subject academically**
- How do your A-Levels link to your chosen course? What independent reading or research have you done? What other course-related activities have you taken part in?

Part 3

- **Extracurricular activities**
- What unrelated additional activities do you take part in? How could these show skills that are relevant for studying at university level?

Part 4

- **Conclusion**
- Including career ambitions

70%

30%

How to boost your personal statement



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Always keep it relevant: how has it helped you to become the student they want?

Your turn to be the Admissions Tutor

What do you think of the following opening paragraph?

BSc Psychology

'One of the main things I love about psychology is that for every view of behaviour there is a conflicting view point arguing the point. Also I love learning about what makes people act the way they do, and why some people have no remorse about the bad things what happens in the world. In A level psychology after we have done our course work we are going to start on the topic of schizophrenia this is a topic I am particularly looking forward to, because I love to understand what makes these people do what they do, and just understand the disorder in its self.'

Your turn to be the Admissions Tutor

What do you think of the following opening paragraph?

BSc Psychology

'One of the main things I love about psychology is that for every view of behaviour there is a conflicting view point arguing the point. Also I love learning about what makes people act the way they do, and why some people have no remorse about the bad things what happens in the world. In A level psychology after we have done our course work we are going to start on the topic of schizophrenia this is a topic I am particularly looking forward to, because I love to understand what makes these people do what they do, and just understand the disorder in its self.'

Your turn to be the Admissions Tutor

What do you think of the following extra-curricular section?

BSc Biology

'Out of school I have a wide variety of hobbies and interests. I enjoy and do quite a lot of travelling. I have visited Florida, Malta, Cyprus, Belgium, Holland, Spain, Gran Canaria, Menorca, Majorca, Israel, Greece, Corfu, Zakynthos, Rhodes and France. I am also going to Morocco later this year and will be visiting Marrakech and the Atlas mountains. While I was in Cyprus this summer, I went scuba diving. I found it an exciting and fantastic experience.

My other hobbies include snorkelling, swimming, reading, drawing and painting'

Your turn to be the Admissions Tutor

What do you think of the following extra-curricular section?

BSc Biology

'Out of school I have a wide variety of hobbies and interests. I enjoy and do quite a lot of travelling. I have visited Florida, Malta, Cyprus, Belgium, Holland, Spain, Gran Canaria, Menorca, Majorca, Israel, Greece, Corfu, Zakynthos, Rhodes and France. I am also going to Morocco later this year and will be visiting Marrakech and the Atlas mountains. While I was in Cyprus this summer, I went scuba diving. I found it an exciting and fantastic experience.

My other hobbies include snorkelling, swimming, reading, drawing and painting'

Your turn to be the Admissions Tutor

What do you think of the following academic section?

BSc Politics & International Relations

'I enjoy absorbing a wide variety of political opinions, and I follow current affairs in the UK and internationally with great interest. I am enthusiastic to extend my political understanding; I find reading the works of Anthony Giddens provides a strong indicator of the ideological future of politics. I also enjoy novels by Robert Harris, whose combination of political fact and fiction produces a gripping plot and an insight into the reactions of everyday individuals to their political surroundings.'



Make it right

- It is a **personal** statement
- It should read like you wrote it (not your parents or your teacher)
- It should be about your enthusiasm and your commitment
- It is good to stand out - but don't go over the top!

Make it count

- You only have 4000 characters
- Get to the point straight away and link **everything** to your application
- If it doesn't relate to being a successful university student: **cut it**. Don't afraid to be brutal about it.
- Wait a while and re-read it – does it still sound good? Is it still relevant?

Top tips from Royal Holloway's Admissions Tutors

Drama

"In personal statements we look for **potential**, and enthusiasm for the subject ranks high in our decisions on whether to make a student an offer."

Management

"It's not what you've done, it's **how relevant you can make it**. Don't just tell me that you were captain of the school rugby team; explain **how this activity has given you the leadership skills and drive** to study management for three years."

Politics & IR

"I always look for something that throws light on applicants as **distinctive individuals**, who have thought about why they want to study a subject. Anything that looks like it has been dictated or copied, wholly or in part, by teachers or careers advisers, is an instant turn-off."

Check your work!



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Spelling, grammar and punctuation are very important, take the time to double check

In summary



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Do

- Give yourself plenty of time to draft and re-draft
- Get other peoples' advice
- Focus on the academic side of things
- Back up everything you say with evidence
- Use themed paragraphs
- **Make sure it reflects you**

Don't

- Leave it to the last minute
- Use jokes (your sense of humour is unlikely to match the Admissions Tutor's)
- Make sweeping statements, especially about the subject you're applying for (remember they're experts and know far more than you do!)
- Use long words that you don't understand



Go to...

www.ucas.com to
locate courses

Attend...

Open Days and get a
feel for the university
in person!

Make...

a shortlist of five
universities you
would like to go to

Get...

prospectuses for
different universities
and read them!

Read...

alternative reviews,
such as The Student
Room or
www.push.co.uk

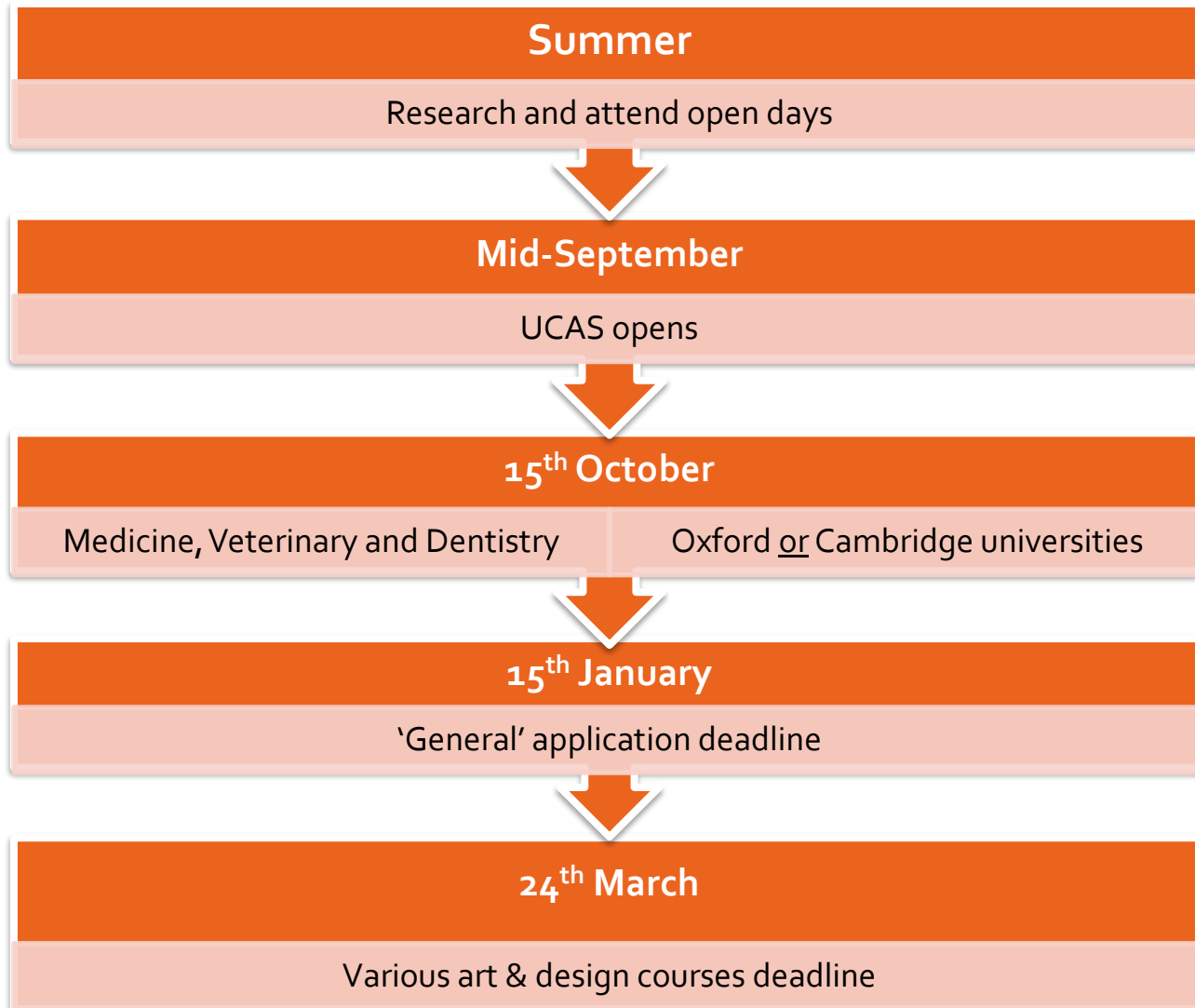
Prepare...

to fill out your UCAS
application and write
your personal
statement

UCAS timeline



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Thank you for listening.
Any questions?

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