



Haileybury Almaty

Parent Partnership Programme Navigating UK & US University Applications: UCAS, Common App, and School Support 27/01/26

Mr Henry Wilkinson, Head of Sixth Form

Mr Steve Stockermans, Head of Futures and College Counselor

Ms Ana Munoz Lopera, College Counselor

Some highlights of offers so far for the class of 2025/26





The UK system. Understanding UCAS, support provided and hidden gems

Mr Wilkinson



Top Global Rankings

- 17 UK universities rank in the QS World University Rankings 2026 top 100
- Success breeds success attracting top academics and students

Shorter, cost effective degrees

- English, Welsh and Northern Irish system is typically 3 years for an undergraduate
- Scottish universities are a 4 year undergraduate – due to a different school examination system
- Masters typically one year compared to two in US

High employability

- Big name recognition and links to industry
- Strong employer demand in fields like finance, tech, and engineering
- Networking opportunities

The UK university system – why go?



Arts, culture and entertainment

- Live music and nightlife
- Excellent museums
- National parks
- Football

Excellent accessibility

- Direct flights
- 4/5 hour time zone difference
- Large Haileybury and Kazakh diaspora
- Cultural awareness from British education and staff

Easy application

- Singular platform – UCAS



Air Astana have direct flights to London and good regional connections are available through Qatar, Turkish and Lufthansa

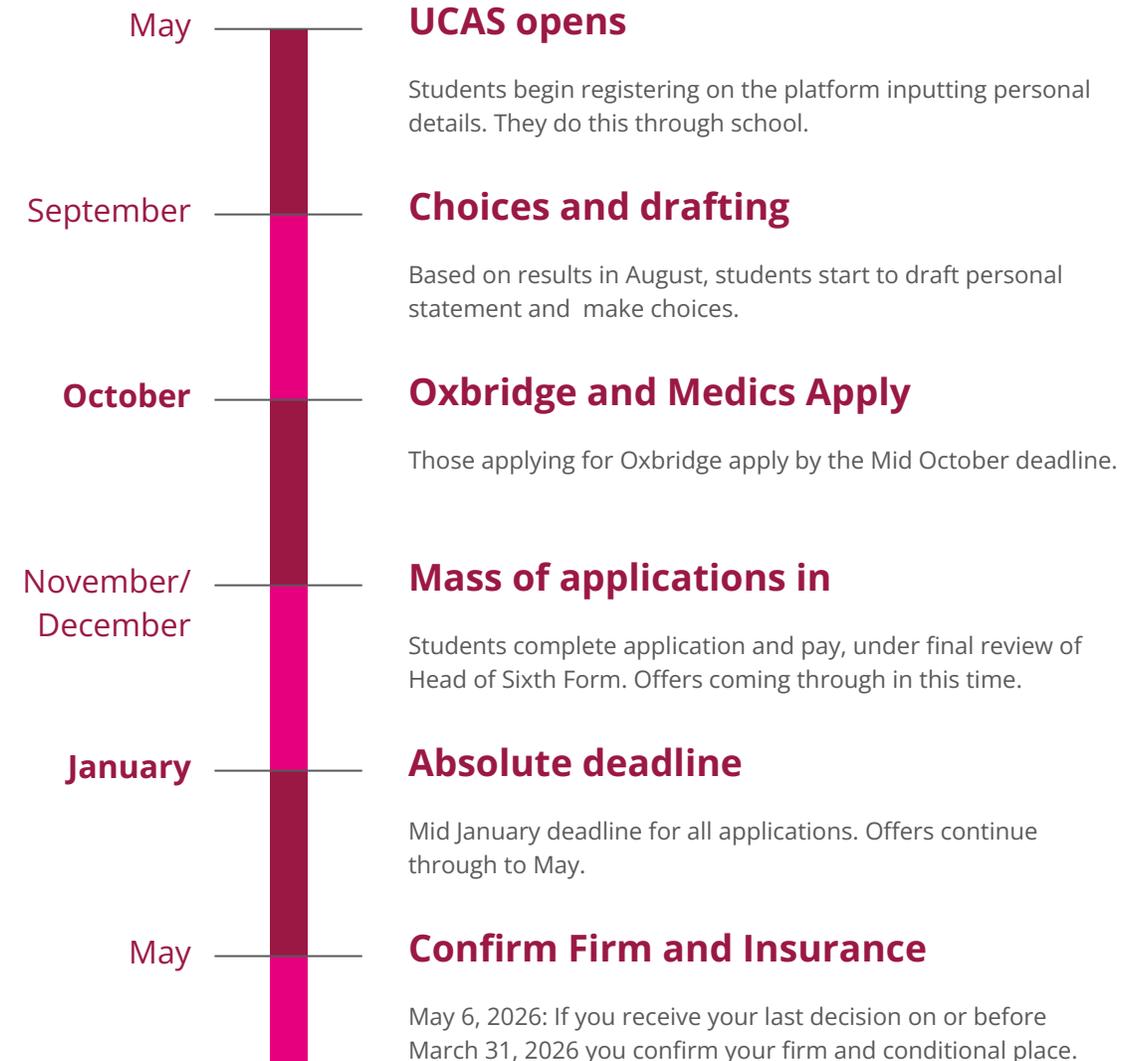


All UK universities are available on UCAS

How UCAS works?



- Online platform – all applications and decisions through central portal
 - managed by school
- Students make 5 choices at once
- Singular reference letter from school
- Singular personal statement of 4,000 characters
- IGCSE results and A-Levels are validated by school



How UCAS works?



Application details

Haileybury Almaty

UCAS centre number: 46333

Student	Personal ID	Group	Date first submitted	Resubmitted date	Application status
Ali Akhmedov	1988161062	Attlee House	02 Oct 2025		Sent

Student progress

Personal details	✓	More about you	✓
Nationality	✓	Education	✓
Where you live	✓	Employment	✓
Contact details	✓	Personal statement	✓
Supporting information	✓	Choices	✓
Finance & funding	✓		

Adviser progress

Application complete	✓
Qualifications checked	✓
Predicted grades complete	✓
Reference complete	✓
Reference approved	✓
Application approved	✓
Sent to UCAS	✓

Key elements of a UCAS application – what universities look at



1. A-Level/ AS-Level Grades (Part of 'Education')
2. IGCSE Grades (Part of 'Education')
3. Personal Statement



4. Reference letter (Done by Head of Sixth Form)
5. Predicted Grades (By teachers, based on AS grades, class performance etc)



Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level

Biology

Awarding organisation: Pearson

Grade:

Qualification date: June 2026

Module(s)

Module title	Grade	Qualification date
Biology 4		June 2026
Biology 5		June 2026
Biology 6		June 2026
Biology 1		October 2025
Biology 2		October 2025
Biology 1	C	June 2025
Biology 2	C	June 2025
Biology 3	A	June 2025

Mathematics

Awarding organisation: Pearson

Grade:

Qualification date: June 2026

Module(s)

Module title	Grade	Qualification date
Mechanics 1		June 2026
Pure Mathematics 3		June 2026
Pure Mathematics 4		June 2026
Pure Mathematics 1	A	June 2025
Pure Mathematics 2	A	June 2025
Statistics 1	B	June 2025

Extended Project (Level 3)

P301

Awarding organisation: Edexcel

Grade: A

Qualification date: August 2025

IGCSE (A*-G)

Chinese (Mandarin) - Foreign Language

Awarding organisation: CIE

Grade: A*

Qualification date: August 2024

Computer Science

Awarding organisation: CIE

Grade: A

Qualification date: August 2024

International GCSE (9-1)

Biology

Awarding organisation: PEARSON

Grade: 9

Qualification date: August 2024

- Module scores are considered for AS



IGCSE and AS grades are used by universities to check the following:

- Do they think the student is likely to make the typical offer?
- Are the school's predicted grades accurate!

UK universities will make an offer based on 3 final A-level grades

- The offer will be conditional until final results are achieved in August

Provider name

UCL (University College London)

Course name

History, Politics and Economics

Course start date

21 Sep 2026

Conditions for acceptance

This offer is subject to you obtaining

GCE A Level grades AA from Economics, History, or Mathematics, or A* in Russian has been noted.

Provider code

U80

Course code

4P47

[Course entry requirements](#)

Point of entry

Year 1

CONDITIONAL OFFER

Date of offer

12 Jan 2026

Application reply deadline

-



The personal statement should show a spike – a clear interest, experience and skills for a subject

- Extracurriculars are only relevant if they are **linked to the intended course**

4,000 characters across three questions (including spaces)

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

Show personality and the spike



- Grades get you considered, an exceptional personal statement gives you a shot at a target
- AI is obvious and takes away from what makes a personal statement interesting
- But there is no need to have a creative essay like US supplementals
 - There are only 4,000 characters – including spaces – so get to the point!
- Boring personal statements are chronological – better ones pick out key experiences and justifies their relevance.

Examples of a spike from a Cambridge interview for Chemistry

- Relevant work experience at a Bitumen plant
- Summer STEM course at Nazarbayev University
- Success in well regarded Science competitions
- Assistance in a research project
- Genuine involvement in School CCAs around science
- Discernible links drawn from subjects to university

Comprehensive support throughout drafting



Question 1: Why do y...

Question 2: How have...

Question 3: What els...

Draft 2 (HWI 24/09)

Question 1: Why do y...

Question 2: How have...

Question 3: What els...

Draft 3 (29.09 HWI)

Question 1: Why do y...

Question 2: How have...

Question 3: What els...

Draft 4 (30/09 HWI)

Question 1: Why do y...

Question 2: How have...

Question 3: What els...

Draft 5 (30/09 HWI)

Question 1: Why do y...

Question 2: How have...

Question 3: What els...

For advice, please see UCAS personal statement guide - <https://www.ucas.com/applying/applying-to-university/writing-your-personal-statement/the-new-personal-statement-for-2026>

Draft 1 (HWI 17/09)

Question 1: Why do you want to study this course or subject?

When I first began preparing for physics and astronomy Olympiads, I was drawn to the way unfamiliar problems forced me to think beyond memorised formulas. Each paper was a puzzle: I had to experiment with ideas, link concepts, and often fail before finding the right path. It was exciting, but also incomplete. I wanted to see whether the same principles could shape something practical in real life.

That opportunity came with our CubeSat project. My responsibility was to design the antenna, and the challenge was to make it compact while still efficient. I tried fractal geometry, running simulations in CST, adjusting parameters until I achieved a stable frequency band. Later, testing the prototype confirmed that the design could actually work. The project won a Silver medal at a national competition, but more important for me was realising that abstract physics could leave the page and turn into working hardware. It was the first time I felt what engineering really is: the translation of ideas into systems.

This combination of theory and application is what attracts me to Oxford's Engineering Science course. Its broad start will let me explore the full range of disciplines, while the chance to specialise later in areas such as aerospace or information systems fits exactly where my curiosity is heading.

 Henry Wilkinson
12:19 PM Sep 17

capitalise subejects

 Henry Wilkinson
12:18 PM Sep 17

when? Any big-name Olympiads?

 Henry Wilkinson
12:19 PM Sep 17

what is this?

 Henry Wilkinson
12:20 PM Sep 17



Progress supported to an Oxford offer



Draft 1 (HWI 17/09)

Question 1: Why do you want to study this course or subject?

When I first began preparing for physics and astronomy Olympiads, I was drawn to the way unfamiliar problems forced me to think beyond memorised formulas. Each paper was a puzzle: I had to experiment with ideas, link concepts, and often fail before finding the right path. It was exciting, but also incomplete. I wanted to see whether the same principles could shape something practical in real life.

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Draft 5 (30/09 HWI)

Question 1: Why do you want to study this course or subject?

I first discovered the appeal of engineering through Physics Olympiads. These have included the British Physics Olympiad, Singapore's STEMCo International Olympiad and the Kazakhstan National Astrophysics Projects Competition (KNAPC). Despite medaling in all of these competitions, it was not the awards that were satisfying; it was working through a problem and reacting to challenges.

Most important to me was KNAPC, where, with a partner, I designed and created a custom-designed Cube Satellite. Our project was highly acclaimed for its novel approach to the antenna, where, noting the risk that space debris presents, I created and installed a fractal antenna into a 10cm frame. This involved UHF and S-band links. We then tested our antenna design against classic CubeSat antennas and found that it operated as efficiently as their classical peers. Through this project, I saw how abstract Physics could become working hardware.

Since then, I have sought projects where the theory and application of Physics intersect, such as CERN Beamline for Schools Competition and a project involving computer modelling air pollution and the built environment of Almaty with the Kazakh British Technical University (KBTU). Engineering attracts me because it joins scientific depth with the discipline of building, modelling, testing, and constantly improving until a system works as expected.



So where to apply in the UK?

Reminder – Limitations of University Rankings



Varying methodologies

- Different ranking systems use different criteria and weightings
- University's position can change depending on which ranking you consult

May not reflect individual needs

- Rankings may not account for factors like campus culture, teaching style, or specific program strengths that are crucial for a good experience
- Often overly focused on Post Graduate studies

Can be manipulated

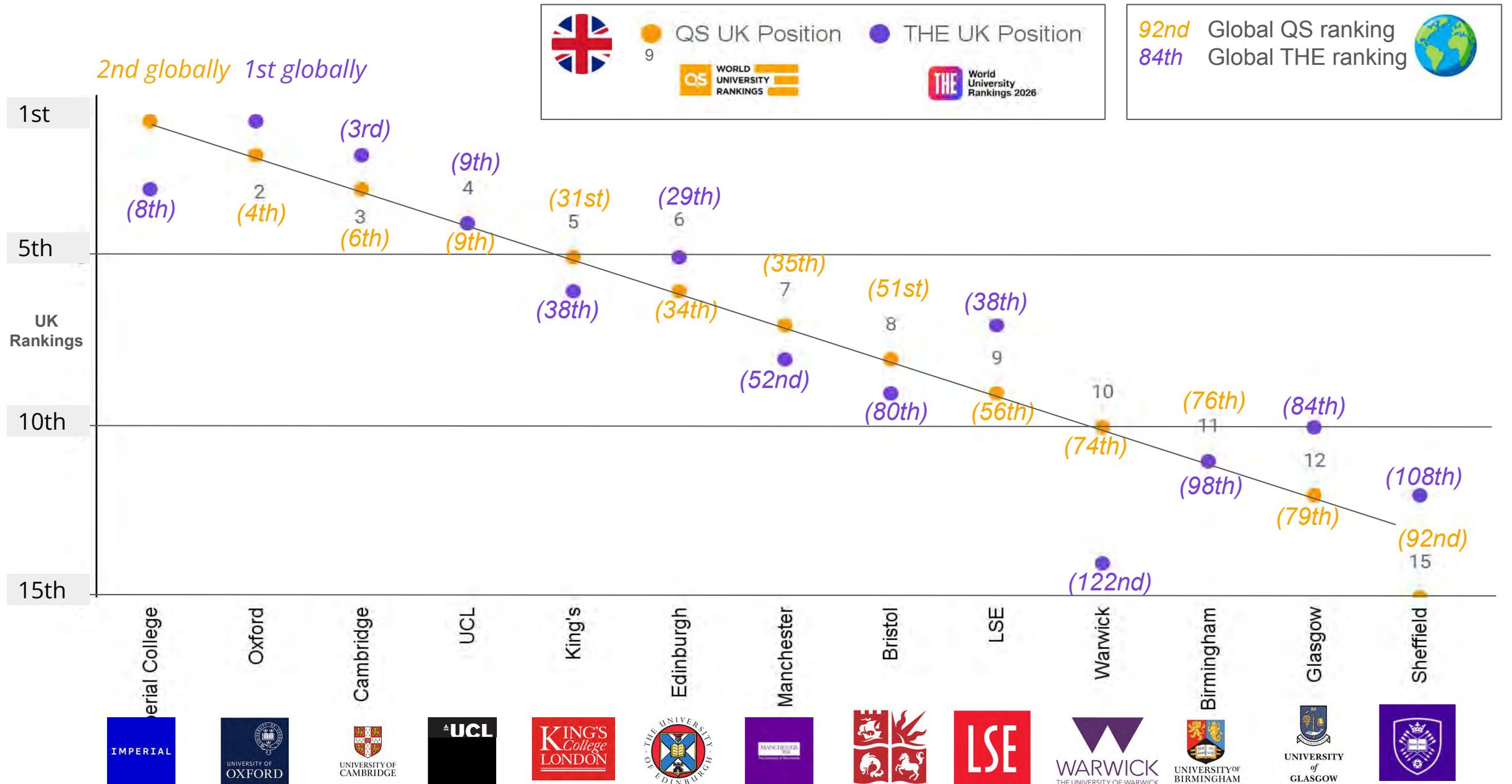
- Rankings can encourage universities to focus on improving their scores through means that may not benefit students
- Such as focusing on research activities that are highly cited.



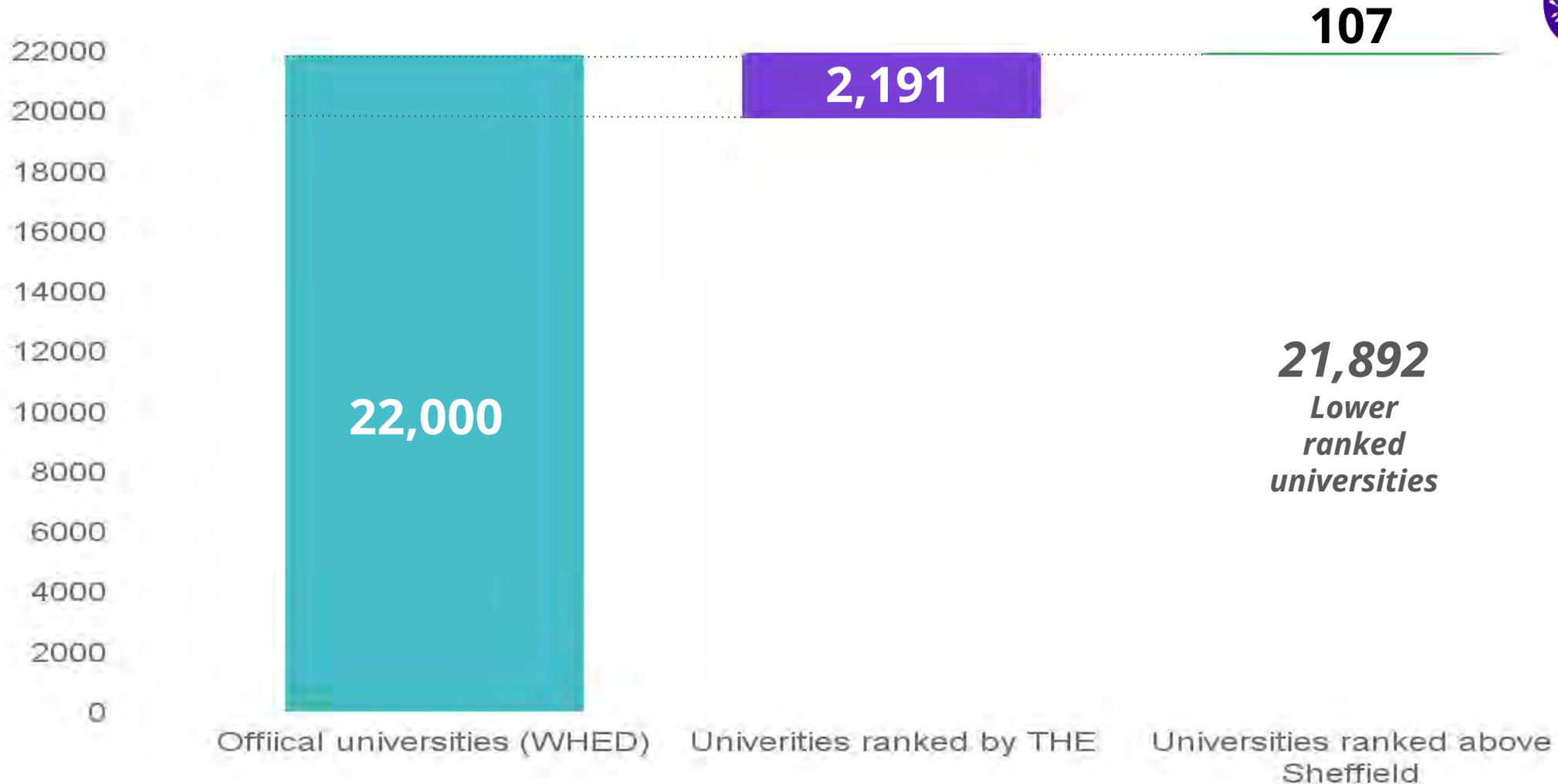
Not all campuses are the same!



Ranking: UK QS position compared with UK THE position (Global rankings included)



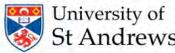
The 'True' Position of Sheffield



But look at your subject area! – specialist examples



Arts and Humanities (*languages, literature and linguistics; history; philosophy; theology; architecture; archaeology; and art, performing arts and design*):

7th UK/ 35th Globally	St Andrews	
9th UK/ 40th Globally	Durham	
10th UK/ 52nd Globally	Lancaster	
11th UK/ 54th Globally	York	

Physical Sciences: (*Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Statistics, Astronomy, Geology, and Environmental, Earth and Marine Sciences*):

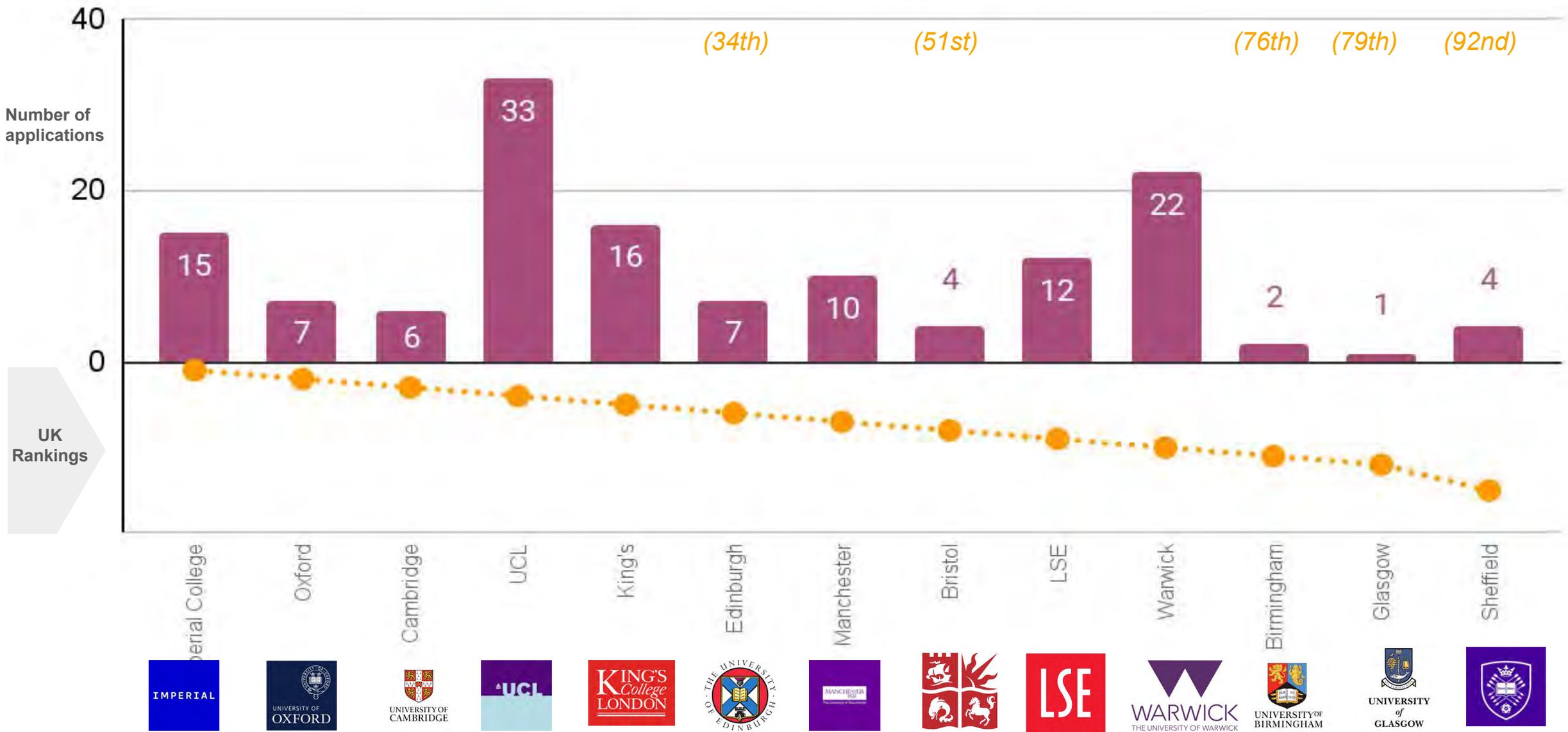
9th UK/ 100 Globally	Southampton	
11th UK/ 102nd Globally	Durham	
13th UK/ 119th Globally	Exeter	
14th UK / 122nd Globally	Leeds	

The Russell Group: The UK's Research Universities



 <p>UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM</p>	 <p>UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE</p>	 <p>CARDIFF UNIVERSITY PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD</p>	 <p>Durham University</p>	 <p>THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH</p>	
 <p>UNIVERSITY OF EXETER</p>	 <p>UNIVERSITY of GLASGOW</p>	 <p>IMPERIAL</p>	 <p>KING'S College LONDON</p>	 <p>UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS</p>	 <p>UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL</p>
 <p>LSE</p>	 <p>MANCHESTER 1824 The University of Manchester</p>	 <p>Newcastle University</p>	 <p>University of Nottingham UK CHINA MALAYSIA</p>	 <p>UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD</p>	 <p>Queen Mary University of London</p>
 <p>QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST</p>	 <p>University of Sheffield</p>	 <p>University of Southampton</p>	 <p>UCL</p>	 <p>WARWICK THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK</p>	 <p>UNIVERSITY of York</p>

HAL applications vs QS Ranking



UK Rankings

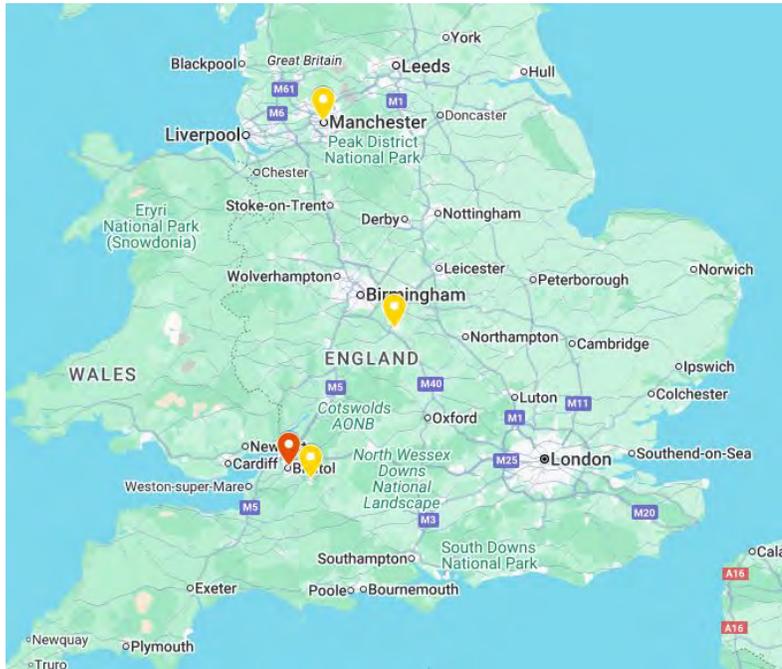


Underappreciated gems: Number of Haileybury Applications



 <p>2</p> <p>UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM</p>	 <p>4</p> <p>UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE</p>	 <p>0</p> <p>CARDIFF UNIVERSITY PRINCE OF WALES CAERDYDD</p>	 <p>6</p> <p>Durham University</p>	 <p>7</p> <p>THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH</p>
 <p>2</p> <p>UNIVERSITY OF EXETER</p>	 <p>1</p> <p>UNIVERSITY of GLASGOW</p>	 <p>15</p> <p>IMPERIAL</p>	 <p>16</p> <p>KING'S COLLEGE LONDON</p>	 <p>3</p> <p>UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS</p>
 <p>12</p> <p>LSE</p>	 <p>10</p> <p>MANCHESTER The University of Manchester</p>	 <p>0</p> <p>Newcastle University</p>	 <p>0</p> <p>University of Nottingham UK CHINA MALAYSIA</p>	 <p>7</p> <p>UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD</p>
 <p>2</p> <p>QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST</p>	 <p>4</p> <p>University of Sheffield</p>	 <p>1</p> <p>University of Southampton</p>	 <p>33</p> <p>WARWICK UNIVERSITY</p>	 <p>22</p> <p>WARWICK THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK</p>
 <p>2</p> <p>Queen Mary University of London</p>	 <p>4</p> <p>UNIVERSITY of York</p>	 <p>1</p> <p>UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL</p>	 <p>2</p> <p>Queen Mary University of London</p>	 <p>1</p> <p>UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL</p>

Spotlight on Bristol University – The City



- Safe
 - Mid sized city – 500,000 residents
- Excellent connections
 - 90 minutes to London on train
 - 45 minutes to Cardiff
 - International Airport
- Young and diverse
 - Median age 33 (UK average 40)
- Major employers in Digital & Creative, Finance, Engineering and manufacturing



IMPERIAL
BRANDS



Spotlight on Bristol University – The City



Historic city with notable architecture



Exceptional Arts Scene – the home of Banksy



Close to the national parks in Wales and SW England



Arguably the best music scene outside of London



Picturesque waterfront setting



One of the youngest and most diverse cities in the UK

Spotlight on Bristol University – The University



- Traditional City Centre Campus in affluent area of the city
- Russell Group university – 51st global ranking
 - High reputation for research
 - Particularly strong reputation in Engineering and Aerospace Engineering
- Large UK private school intake but with 28% of students being international
- Scholarships available
 - Typically from £6,500 to £13,000 per year



Bristol's Campus

Suggested application strategy for UCAS



1 Safety

>75% chance of acceptance

One or two grade points below your AS grades. E.g A,B,B if you are on an A,A,B

- This is if something goes wrong on results day
- But remember you need to be happy to go here!
- If you have multiple countries, this can be dispensed with

3 target

>50% chance of acceptance

Same grade profile that you have. But remember universities are often over subscribed!

- These are your main universities where you should realistically expect to go.
- This is what you will be targeting your personal statement for if you are applying for different courses

1 Reach

<25% chance of acceptance

One to two point above your AS grades. E.g A,A,A if you are on an A,A,B

Or hyper competitive university

- Ambitious but not completely out of the question (remember UK only has 5 choices!)



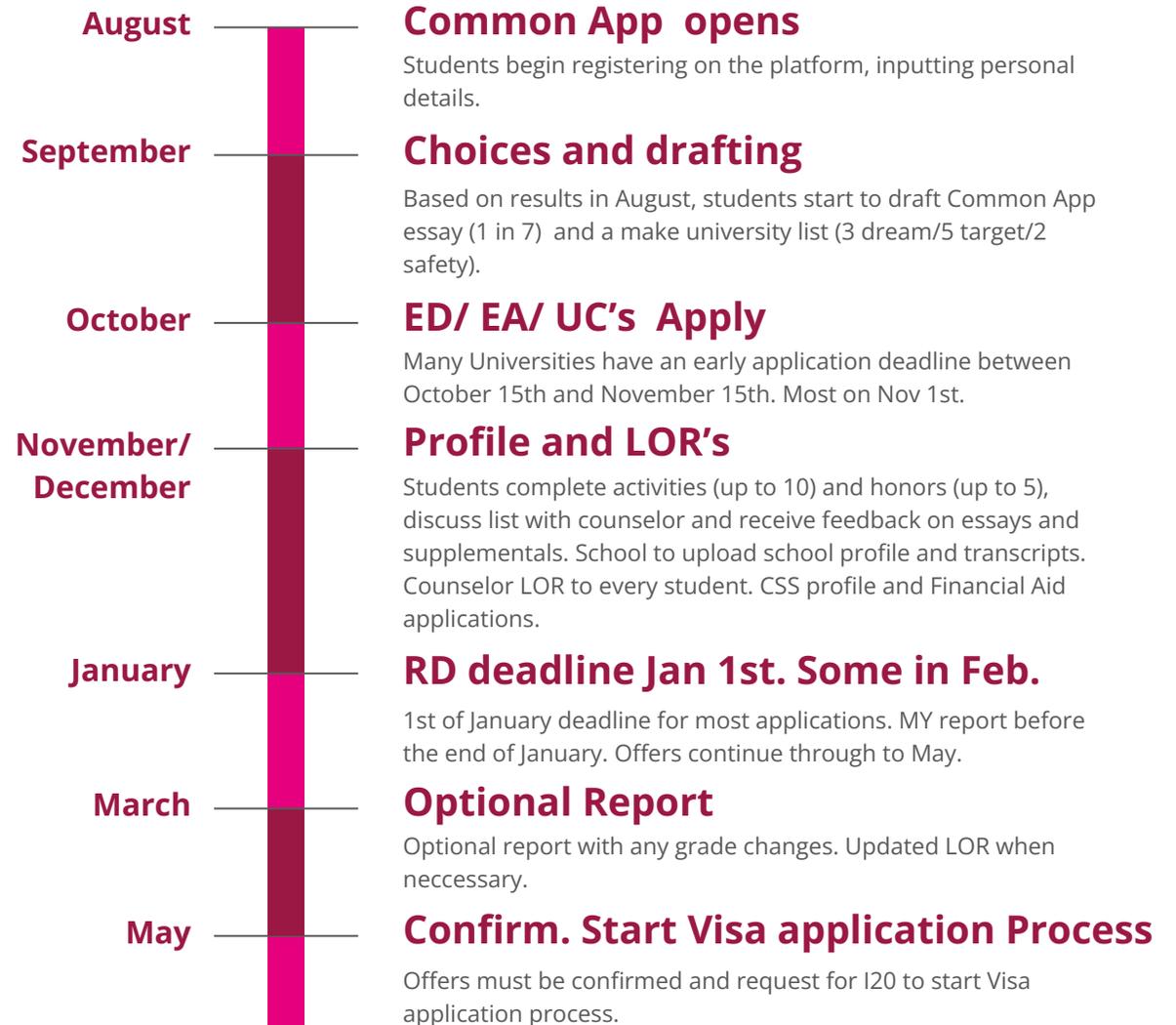
The US. Understanding Common App and how we support your child

Ms Munoz and Mr Stockermans

How the Common App works?



- Online platform managed by the College Board
- Students can make 20 choices at once
- Several reference letters from school (Depending on the university)
- Singular personal statement of 650 word and several short answer questions (250 words) and writing supplements (500 to 600 words each)
- IGCSE results and A-Levels are validated by school
- SAT and IELTS a must.



Parts of the Common App



FERPA Waiver

-  **School report**
Submitted
-  **Counselor recommendation**
Submitted
-  **Optional report**
Not required
-  **Optional report 2**
Not yet available
-  **Mid-year report**
Submitted
-  **Final report**
In progress

CAID:

 May 03

Notifications

[Show notifications](#) 

Common App progress


Profile
Complete


Family
Complete


Education
Complete


Testing
Complete


Activities
Complete


Writing
Complete


C&G
Not applicable

[Preview application progress](#)

Common App Writing Prompts



1. Some students have a background, **identity**, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a **challenge**, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you **questioned** or challenged **a belief** or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this **gratitude** affected or motivated you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of **personal growth** and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, **idea**, or concept you find so engaging that it **makes you lose all track of time**. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on **any topic** of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design

Follow up



and name every dragon Hagrid ever mentioned. So when Sirius fell through the veil in *The Order of the Phoenix*, I sat frozen in disbelief. My outraged “WHAT?!” could probably be heard by the neighbors. Of all the characters, surely he deserved a happy ending. If J.K. Rowling wouldn't give him one, I would. I opened a notebook and wrote an alternative ending in which the villains were punished and Sirius finally walked free. I refused to accept the story I was handed.

That rebellion became an obsession. I discovered fanfiction, where I could make a change. To join the community, I read the saga in English and taught myself to write in English, too. I carried a frayed dictionary, scribbled translations in the margins, and posted my imperfect stories online. Angry comments poured in when I botched a timeline or mistranslated a phrase. When I confused ‘wand’ with ‘stick,’ one reader commented sarcastically, “So Harry fought Voldemort with a broom handle?” Slowly, my writing improved, and ~~I found~~ readers began to like and comment positively on who liked my stories. Nothing felt so empowering. ~~as my first positive review~~. For the first time, I sensed the strength of community.

That rebellion became an obsession. Entering the fanfiction community, I felt like Ron struggling with *Wingardium Leviosa*, waving my wand the wrong way, and mispronouncing every word. At first, I didn't understand a thing. Determined to keep up, I read the saga in English and began writing in it, too. My stories looked exactly like what they were: the clumsy work of an eleven-year-old in a foreign language. Angry comments poured in when I botched a timeline or mistranslated a phrase. Once, when I confused “wand” with “stick,” a reader sneered: “So Harry fought Voldemort with a broom handle?” But slowly, my writing improved, and I found readers who liked my stories. Nothing felt as empowering as my first

 Ana Isabel Munoz...
8:04 AM Oct 2

Delete: “I found”

 Ana Isabel Munoz...
8:04 AM Oct 2

Replace: “who liked” with “began to like and comment positively on”

 Ana Isabel Munoz... ✓ ✕
8:05 AM Oct 2

Replace: “as” with “so”

Reply or add others with @

 Ana Isabel Munoz...
8:05 AM Oct 2

Replace: “as my first positive review” with “.”

Different deadlines



Good evening, Ana Isabel · Cour

Deadlines

20/20 deadlines added

January < > Today

- Jan 1 [Harvard University](#)
- [Princeton University](#)
- [Washington and Lee University](#)
- Jan 2 [Cornell University](#)
- [Northwestern University](#)
- [University of Notre Dame](#)
- [Yale University](#)
- Jan 4 [Rice University](#)
- [Swarthmore College](#)
- Jan 5 [California Institute of Technology \(Caltech\)](#)
- [Duke University](#)
- [Middlebury College](#)
- [Stanford University](#)
- [Tufts University](#)
- Jan 10 [Colby College](#)
- Jan 15 [Connecticut College](#)
- [Lafayette College](#)
- [Trinity College](#)
- [Union College](#)

January

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2	3	4	5	6	7



Oberlin College of Arts and Sciences

January 15, 2026 · Regular Decision



Skidmore College

January 08, 2026 · Regular Decision



University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

January 05, 2026 · Regular Decision



University of Michigan

February 01, 2026 · Regular Decision



Vassar College

January 07, 2026 · Regular Decision



Parts of the Common App. Counselor



- AA Student info**
FERPA waived
- School report**
Submitted
- Counselor recommendation**
Submitted
- Optional report**
Not required
- Optional report 2**
Not yet available

Brown University

Jan 5, 2026 · Regular Decision

✉ admission@brown.edu



Counselor form requirements

 School report Downloaded (12/26/2025)	 Early decision 1 Not applicable	 Early decision 2 Not applicable	 Fee waiver Not applicable
 Counselor recommendation Downloaded (12/26/2025)	 Optional report Not required	 Mid year report Downloaded (01/10/2026)	 Final year report Required



Writing supplement

Submitted (Dec 25, 2025)
Downloaded (Dec 26, 2025)

[Writing supplement PDF](#)



College questions

Submitted (Dec 25, 2025)
Downloaded (Dec 26, 2025)

[Application PDF](#)

Different College Questions



How many piano tuners are there in Chicago? What is the total length of chalk used by UChicago professors in a year? How many pages of books are in the Regenstein Library? These questions are among a class of estimation problems named after University of Chicago physicist Enrico Fermi. Create your own Fermi estimation problem, give it your best answer, and show us how you got there.



University of Chicago alumna and renowned author/critic Susan Sontag said, The only interesting answers are those that destroy the questions. Destroy a question with your answer.



Joan of Arkansas. Queen Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Babe Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Mash up a historical figure with a new time period, environment, location, or occupation, and tell us their story.



People often think of language as a connector... tell us how your language makes you unique.





1. **U RICHMOND. (350 to 600 words)** You have a platform to create change. What is an action or policy you might propose to address an issue of social injustice in your school or local community, or on a national or global scale?
2. **U PENN (150-200 words)** Write a short thank-you note to someone you have not yet thanked and would like to acknowledge. (We encourage you to share this note with that person, if possible, and reflect on the experience!
4. **BROWN. (250 words)** Brown's Open Curriculum allows students to explore broadly while also diving deeply into their academic pursuits. Tell us about any academic interests that excite you and how you might pursue them at Brown.
5. **HARVARD. (150 words)** Describe a time when you strongly disagreed with someone about an idea or issue. How did you communicate or engage with this person? What did you learn from this experience?



Join us next time for a deeper dive into US applications!

Thank you

Any questions?

