

YOUR GUIDE TO  
**HIGHER  
EDUCATION**

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**A WORD FROM**

*Mr Szafranski*

**Welcome to your Higher Education guide!**

In the not-too-distant future you will be leaving Purcell to make your way in the world. Many people go on to study at conservatoire, but not all. Some will go to university to read Music, others to read a language or Law or computer game design and some decide to take some time out or explore other opportunities. Every member of this community is unique and you will all find the place that is best for you. That may not be where your friends are going, and it may not be the place that others might expect you to go. These places will be your home for the next three, four, six or more years and it is important that you feel comfortable there.

This guide contains information on the application process itself for many different institutions, as well as useful information on what happens after you make an application. It may not answer all your questions, but it should help point you in the right direction. You shouldn't be afraid to seek help and advice from others - depending on your destination you might want to speak with your instrumental teacher and Head of Department, or you might want to speak with one of your subject teachers about specific courses you're interested in. We are all here to help you and support you - all you need to do is ask!

When the summer of your Upper Sixth year rolls around and it is time for you to leave us, remember that you need not leave us for good. You will always be welcome here in the Purcell community and we would love to see you back at a concert, or even as a member of staff!

**Best of luck to you all!**

# WHERE DO I BEGIN?

You may have already heard of, or will do in the near future, people talking about “Level 3 qualifications” and other levels and have no idea what this means. That’s ok - a lot of people haven’t got a clue either!

Generally, people tend to refer to the qualification they’ve received rather than the level it’s at. However, when you encounter people who have been through different systems or studied in different ways it’s useful to be able to compare.

In the UK, the system looks like this:

		LEVEL			
UNIVERSITY	8	Doctorate PhD			
	7	Master's Degree MA, MSc, MPhil			Degree Apprenticeships
	6	Undergraduate Degree BA, BSc			
	5		Foundation degree FdA, FdSc	Higher National Diploma HND	Higher Apprenticeships
	4			Higher National Certificate HNC	
COLLEGE	3	AS / A2 / A level T Level	BTEC Nationals		Advanced Apprenticeships
SCHOOL	2	GCSE Grades 9–4	BTEC Firsts		Intermediate Apprenticeships
	1	GCSE Grades 3–1			

What does this mean for you? Well it’ll mean that you’ll likely already have obtained Level 2 qualifications and, by the end of August, you’ll have some Level 3 ones as well. Most of you will likely go on to achieve up to Level 6 or Level 7 and a few may make it up to Level 8. Most students who leave Purcell do this via an undergraduate degree at Conservatoire or University, but there are other options out there too.

Some people already have a very fixed idea of what their future will look like - they’ve decided where they want to study, what they want to do afterwards and what their job will be once they leave. However, many of you won’t have fixed ideas yet and that’s ok! If you’re really undecided about what might suit you, particularly if you’re not sure Music is your thing any more, you might want to start with a futures or careers quiz, such as [this one offered by UCAS](#).

# CONSERVATOIRE OR UNIVERSITY?

One question that some of you will be asking is whether to study at University or Conservatoire. It's not a question we can answer for you - ultimately it has to be your decision. There is no rule that says one type of musically or artistically gifted person should study at a university, and another at a conservatoire. Remember both conservatoire and university courses can lead to a Bachelor's degree, so wanting a degree is not a reason for choosing a university.

As a general guide, if your interests are focused on a practical discipline, a conservatoire is likely to be your best option. If your prime interest in music is more academic, with a focus on such things as history, analysis, criticism, harmony and counterpoint, and the philosophy and psychology of the performing arts, a university course may suit you better. All these disciplines are also taught at conservatoire but, as you would expect, the emphasis is more on practical and vocational performance with academic courses providing an important underpinning.

If you want to study music as part of a combined degree with another subject, a university may be your best option, but you should do your research - some conservatoires offer either joint degrees or shared modules with universities, such as the RNCM/Manchester joint course.

Obviously, if you want to study something other than music then university will be your best bet. There are university courses to suit everyone and each one is different. Make sure you look at the modules offered as well as the information available on choosing the best place for you - don't just rely on league tables and international recognition to make your decision.



# CONSERVATOIRES

Here are a few questions that often get asked about studying at conservatoire. It isn't an exhaustive list and you may have additional questions of your own.

The individual websites of each of the conservatoires have their own FAQ (Frequently Asked Question) pages and the instrumental departments have a lot more specific information for your instrument. Do check them out - a list of their webpages can be found at the end of this booklet.

## *How long do courses last?*

Like most European conservatoires, first degrees at UK Conservatoires (usually a BMus) normally last four years, as compared with three years for a typical Bachelor course at a University. Higher degrees at Masters level generally last two years at both conservatoires and universities, though some institutions offer intensive Masters courses lasting one calendar year. Postgraduate Diplomas lasting one academic year are also on offer.

## *How is a conservatoire organised?*

Conservatoires are divided into faculties or departments, such as Strings, Piano, Vocal, Opera, Acting etc. When you arrive at a conservatoire you will be assigned to a department, depending on your discipline. The department is responsible for providing your training, both individual and ensemble. Some of this will be compulsory, some will be optional. You will also be expected to take other subjects as part of your broad academic training.

## *How much will it cost?*

Every course at conservatoires will generally have two different fees: one for home students, one for international students.

- The 'home' student fee applies to UK-based students *\*There are different fees and funding structures in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for UK/EU students. Do check the individual conservatoire websites for more details.*
- The 'international' student fee applies to students based in all other countries. Post-Brexit it is likely that students who do not live permanently in the UK will be unable to access home fees or Student Loans.
- The typical fee for undergraduate degrees for 'home' students is £9,000 per year. Fees for postgraduate Masters degrees range between £8,500 and £12,500. Full details of the costs of any course can be found on the appropriate conservatoire website.

## *Do conservatoires provide accommodation?*

All conservatoires provide some accommodation. Typically students live in college accommodation for the first one or two years of their course, and then move into private rented accommodation. This often takes the form of a shared flat with other students.

## *How is the academic year organised?*

Like UK universities, most UK conservatoires follow a three-term academic year, beginning in mid-September. Each term is approximately 12 weeks in length, with a four-week break over Christmas between terms 1 and 2, another four-week Easter break between terms 2 and 3, and a long 8-week break during the summer.

## *Do UK conservatoires provide medical services?*

All 'home' students, and most international students, are entitled to free medical treatment from the UK National Health Service. The first step is to register with an NHS doctor near to where you live during term-time, or through the conservatoire's own health service, where there is one. In addition UK conservatoires provide a range of counselling services for students and also help to provide specialist therapies of particular relevance to performing artists, such as osteopathy and Alexander Technique.

## *Will I get a job when I have completed my studies?*

There can be no guarantee of your finding a job. But your chances are good. On average over 94% of UK conservatoire graduates found employment within six months of gaining their degree.

The world of the performing arts is a competitive one. Jobs in the traditional sense are usually not the norm. However, many musicians and performers use the wide range of skills they develop at conservatoires to establish successful careers which often comprise a portfolio of activities – including performing, teaching and coaching.

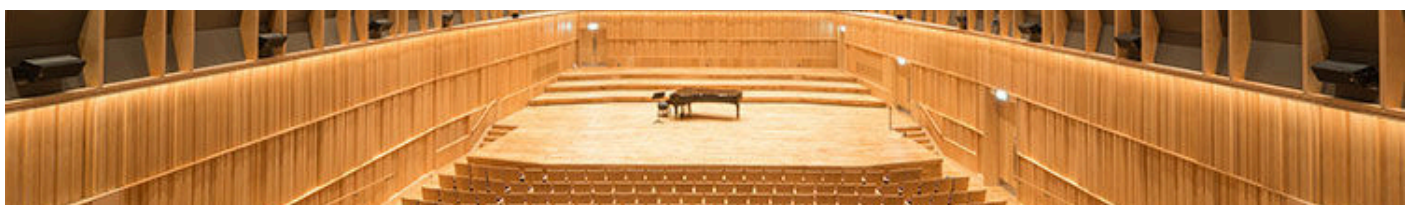
Much depends on your willingness to be flexible in the way you pursue your career. If you leave a conservatoire with very fixed ideas of what work you are willing to do, you will reduce your chances. This is not to say you should not pursue definite long-term goals, but you should be prepared to accept that your path to that goal may not be a straight one; indeed, showing a willingness to be flexible may actually help you to reach it.

## *Is there a minimum age for applicants?*

Some UK conservatoires expect students to have reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday by the first day of their first term, but individual conservatoires vary so check the websites.

## *Can I study if I am disabled?*

Conservatoires make every effort to welcome students with disabilities, and are required by law to provide certain facilities, e.g. wheelchair access. They also provide specific support for students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia. If you qualify as a home student for funding purposes you may be eligible for help from the government's Disabled Students' Allowances.





# UNIVERSITIES

## *How long do courses last?*

Typical Bachelor courses at a University last for 3 years. Higher degrees at Masters level generally last two years at both conservatoires and universities, though some institutions offer intensive Masters courses lasting one calendar year. However, there are differences for certain courses. Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science usually start with a 4-year course, and many Art faculties encourage students to complete a 1-year Foundation course before embarking on the 3-year degree.

## *How are universities organised?*

Universities generally operate along two lines: collegiate and non-collegiate. Oxford, Cambridge and Durham for example all have separate colleges to which students apply and are accepted to which are responsible for all aspects of their learning, pastoral care and accommodation. However, if you are not in a collegiate university the pastoral, accommodation and other non-subject-specific aspects will be managed by teams within the university. Beyond that, all students are members of their own Department (sometimes called Faculty) which will be a collection of courses with something in common - for example French and German degrees would both be run by the Modern Languages Department/Faculty.

## *How much will it cost?*

Every course at university will generally have two different fees: one for home students, one for international students.

- The 'home' student fee applies to UK-based students \**There are different fees and funding structures in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for UK/EU students. Please check the individual university websites for more details.*
- The 'international' student fee applies to students based in all other countries. Post-Brexit it is likely that students who do not live permanently in the UK will be unable to access home fees or Student Loans.
- The typical fee for undergraduate degrees for 'home' students is £9,000 per year. Fees for postgraduate Masters degrees range between £8,500 and £12,500. Full details of the costs of any course can be found on the appropriate university website.

## *Do universities provide accommodation?*

All universities provide some accommodation. Typically students live in university accommodation (often known as 'halls') for the first year of their course, and then move into private rented accommodation. This often takes the form of a shared flat with other students.

## *How is the academic year organised?*

UK universities follow a three-term academic year, beginning in mid-September. Each term is approximately 12 weeks in length, with a four-week break over Christmas between terms 1 and 2, another

four-week Easter break between terms 2 and 3, and a long 8-week break during the summer. Whilst you won't have a formal 'half term' holiday like you do at school, some university courses run a 'reading week' where classes are suspended.

### *Do UK universities provide medical services?*

All 'home' students, and most international students, are entitled to free medical treatment from the UK National Health Service. The first step is to register with an NHS doctor near to where you live during term-time, or through the university's own health service, where there is one. In addition most UK universities provide a range of counselling services for students.

### *Will I get a job when I have completed my studies?*

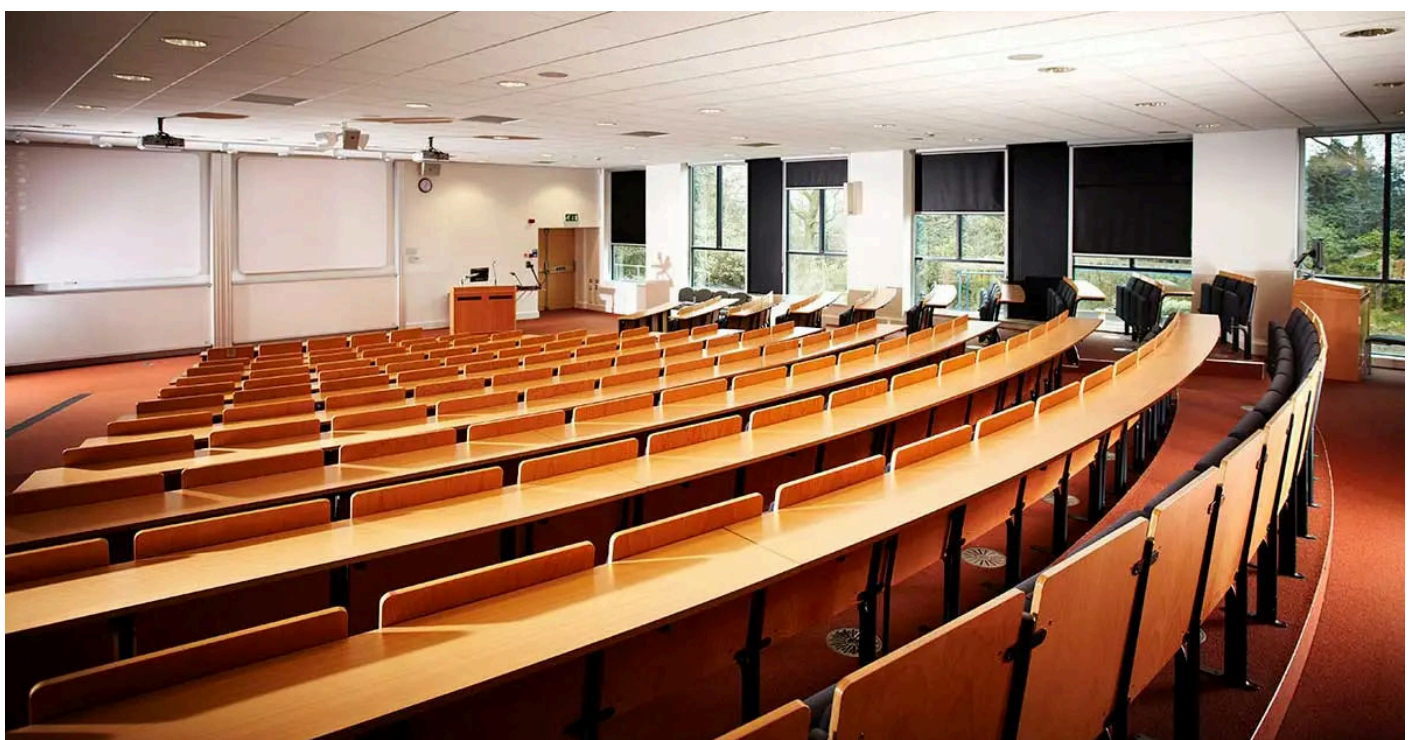
There can be no guarantee of your finding a job. But your chances are good. On average over 86% of UK graduates found employment within six months of gaining their degree. Some degrees will lead to specific jobs, but many will provide skills that are transferable to many different fields. There is no one route for students, although you will usually be given guidance in your third (or final) year by the university.

### *Is there a minimum age for applicants?*

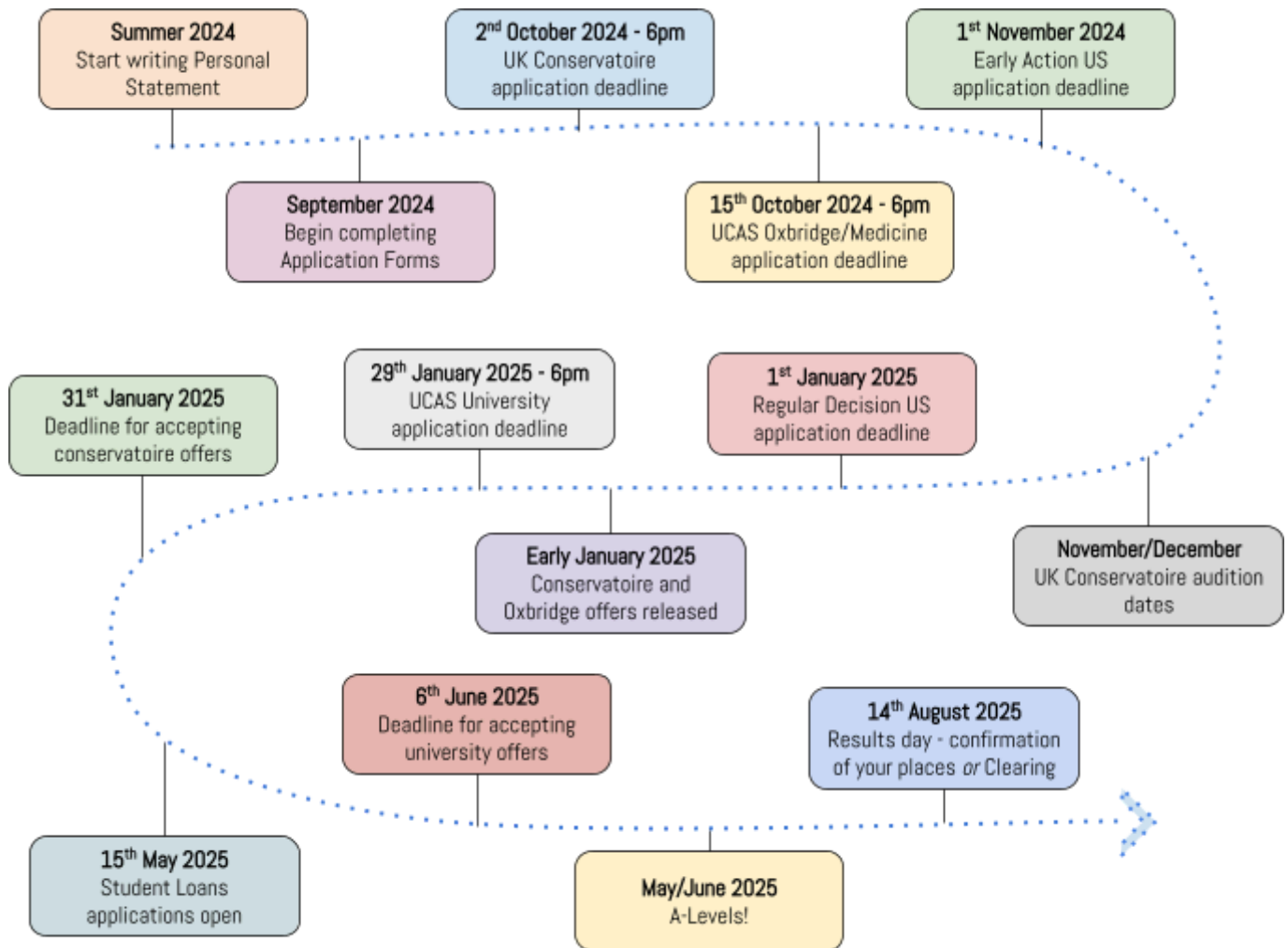
Most UK universities expect students to have reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday by the first day of their first term, but individual universities vary so check the websites.

### *Can I study if I am disabled?*

Universities make every effort to welcome students with disabilities, and are required by law to provide certain facilities, e.g. wheelchair access. They also provide specific support for students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia. If you qualify as a home student for funding purposes you may be eligible for help from the government's Disabled Students' Allowances.



# TIMELINE



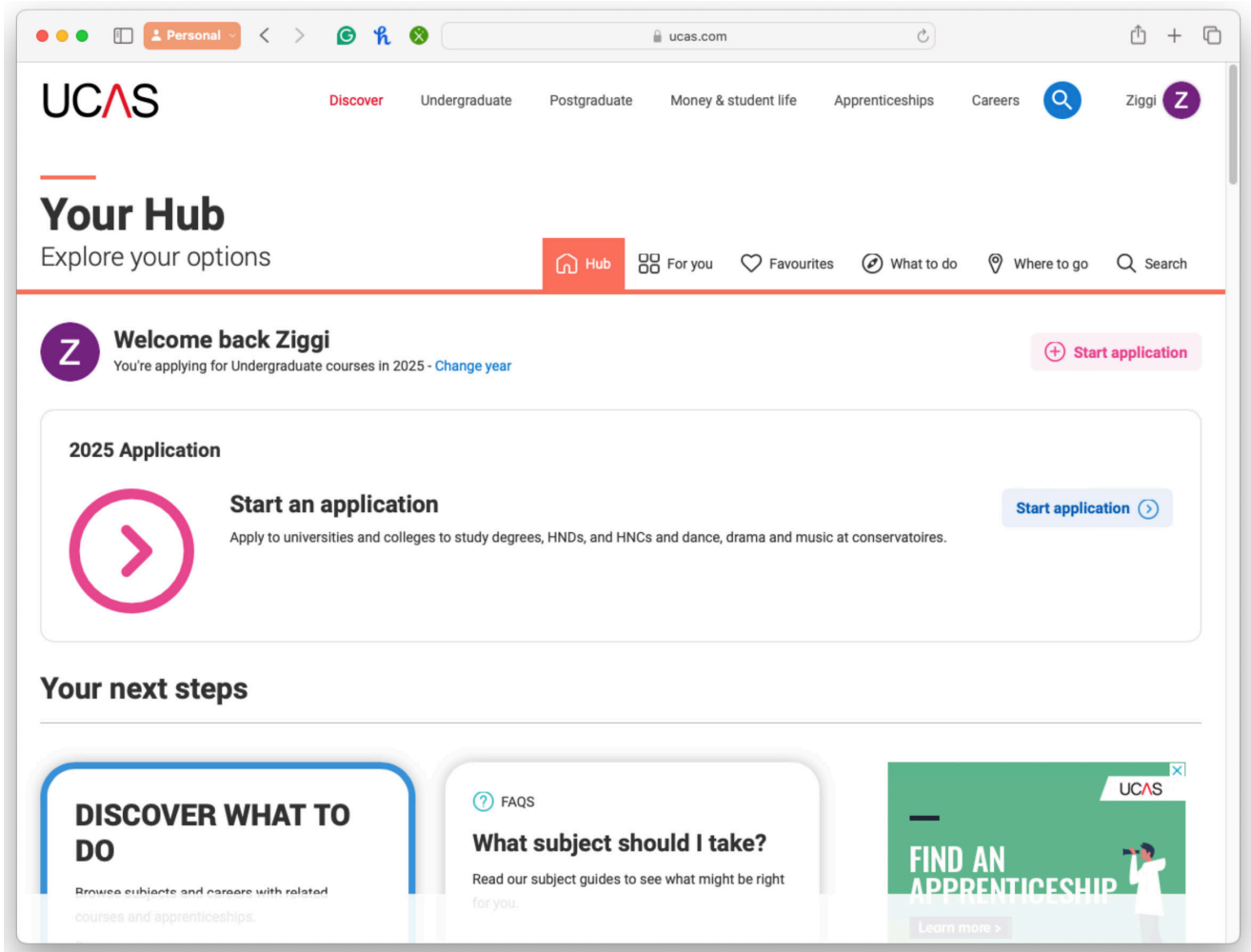
## Important Dates

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024</b>	UK Conservatoire application deadline (Guildhall and UCAS)
<b>15<sup>th</sup> October 2024</b>	UCAS application deadline for Oxford/Cambridge, Medicine and Dentistry
<b>1<sup>st</sup> November 2024</b>	US Early Action deadline (for some colleges)
<b>1<sup>st</sup> January 2025</b>	US Regular Decision deadline (for most colleges)
<b>29<sup>th</sup> January 2025</b>	UCAS application deadline for all other university courses
<b>31<sup>st</sup> January 2025</b>	Deadline for accepting conservatoire offers
<b>15<sup>th</sup> May 2025</b>	Applications open for UK Student Loans
<b>6<sup>th</sup> June 2025</b>	Deadline for accepting university offers
<b>14<sup>th</sup> August 2025</b>	Results Day! Results get sent to your first choice and your offers will be confirmed by email. If you don't meet your offers then you can opt for Clearing or taking a Gap year.

# APPLICATION CONSERVATOIRE

## 1. Register to use the Hub

- <https://www.ucas.com/students>
- Use a **personal** email address
- Don't lose your login details – write them on your phone!
- This is the same account for both conservatoire and university applications



## 2. Start a new application

- You'll be applying to start your studies in **2025** - make sure you select the correct year and that you're interested in **Undergraduate** courses
- Once the conservatoire application window is open (usually mid-July) you'll be able to select this as an option and start your application!
- There are questions about nationality, residency, fee status, criminal convictions etc. to answer which you can do at any point between starting your application and completing it. It's always better to get through it earlier rather than later as it'll take the pressure off you when we get closer to the deadline

### 3. Fill in every section

The application is broken down into several sections, all of which need completing before you can submit

#### → Your Choices

You can add up to **six** choices of conservatoire here. Mr Hoskins advises that most students should be looking at no more than three. Remember there's no point in putting down (and paying for!) an audition somewhere you really don't want to go! You'll find Guildhall isn't on the list - this is because they have their own application system (see below)

#### → Personal Details

- ▶ You **MUST** use your **FULL LEGAL NAME** - if you don't then the UCAS system won't be able to automatically share your grades with your conservatoire of choice on results day and this could delay your start date

#### → Contact and residency details

- ▶ **Nominated Access:** If you want someone else to be able to access your application or speak on your behalf put them in here - often people either leave it blank or include a parent
- ▶ **Term address** is where you are when at school (for boarders this will be the Purcell address) whilst **Home address** is where you call home (usually where your parents live)
- ▶ The assessment emergency contact should be someone they can call if there's an emergency on the day of your audition - often people use the boarding house or a parent

#### → Nationality details

#### → English language skills

#### → Finance and funding

- ▶ It's ok to leave this as 'Not known' for the moment. If you're a UK student and planning on applying for a student loan you should select **UL, ChI, IoM or EU student finance services** and select the local authority where your home address is

#### → Diversity and inclusion

#### → More about you

- ▶ It's always best to be honest here as conservatoires are keen to support students with additional needs.

#### → Education

- ▶ Make sure you enter every school you've sat exams in: Purcell (obviously!) and if you did GCSEs elsewhere, for example, pop that school in here as well
- ▶ Include any Junior departments you may have attended/are currently attending

- ▶ Don't worry about your ULN number if you don't have your GCSE certificates to hand - it's ok to leave this blank
- ▶ Make sure that you select **Below honours degree level qualifications** in the final box

### ▶ **Qualifications**

- ▶ Under each school in the Education section you'll see a blue button that says **Add qualification**
- ▶ You must enter all your qualifications (GCSEs, A-Levels etc.) whether you've taken them, passed them, failed them, or are waiting to take them
- ▶ You **must** put in your current A-Levels and say that the results are **Pending**. See the last section in this booklet for more information on how to list your subjects
- ▶ Include music qualifications if you have them!

### ▶ **Personal Statement**

- ▶ Make sure you read the section on personal statements in this booklet before you submit it!
- ▶ The personal statement has space for 4000 characters (including spaces) and/or 47 lines - but it's worth noting that different word processing software word counts are calculated in slightly different ways! The best way to check is to copy/paste into the box on the application form and preview - it'll tell you what space you've got (or gone over by!)

### ▶ **References**

- ▶ You need to put in **two referees** - an **academic** and a **practical** referee
- ▶ Make sure that you tick the box that says:  
*I will download the reference form to send to my referee, who will submit it to the conservatoire(s) directly.*  
If you don't then there may be delays with your application being sent off which prevent you from getting an audition!

- ▶ Your **academic referee** is:

*Name:* Mr Ziggi Szafranski  
*Address:* The Purcell School  
 Aldenham Road  
 Bushey WD23 2TS  
*Phone:* 01923 331100  
*Email:* z.szafranski@purcell-school.org

- ▶ Your **practical referee** is:

*Name:* Your Instrumental Teacher  
*Address:* The Purcell School  
 Aldenham Road  
 Bushey WD23 2TS  
*Phone:* 01923 331100  
*Email:* [i.teacher@purcell-school.org](mailto:i.teacher@purcell-school.org)

→ **Pay and Send (and Check!)**

- ▶ Once you're finished with your form, on the main Application Overview page you'll see the Application status bar at the top

**Application status**

Your 2024 application should reach us by one of these dates to ensure consideration by conservatoires:

- **Music applications:** 2 October 2023, 18:00:00 (UK time)
- **Other applications:** 31 January 2024, 18:00 (UK time)

1/6 CHOICES    100% PROFILE    ✓ PERSONAL STATEMENT    ✓ REFERENCE    READY TO SEND

Review and submit >

- ▶ You'll need to click the **Review and Submit** button which will take you to two declaration pages and then the payment page
- ▶ **BEFORE YOU MAKE YOUR PAYMENT** you will need to click the **Download as PDF** button (right hand side) and send it to Mr Szafranski by email to be checked for any errors
- ▶ Once you've heard back from Mr Szafranski you can go ahead and pay. Remember that each audition is around £100 and there's a small fee to pay to UCAS (£28.50) as well so it can end up being quite a hefty amount to pay! You can pay by credit or debit card but will need those details to hand. Some places may offer **fee waivers** for audition fees - if you are eligible you'll need to apply to the conservatoire directly and get it confirmed before you submit your form so make sure you give yourself plenty of time!



**Note:** most conservatoires will advise against joint-study applications, and if they do they will often require you to make two separate applications and pay two separate application fees. You'll need to speak with each department to ask before you submit your application(s).

# APPLICATION GUILDHALL

Guildhall left the UCAS system several years ago and have their own system in place for applications. You'll need to go to [www.gsmd.ac.uk](http://www.gsmd.ac.uk) and sign up for an application there.

## 1. Select your course

- You'll get very familiar with this page - every time you want to go back to your application you'll need to go through a few steps before you can log in
- Start by selecting **Music Programmes**, then **Undergraduate (Bachelors/1st cycle)** and **BMus (Hons) Music**
- You'll then need to pick your **Specialism** (Classical, Electronic Music or Jazz) and your **Instrument**.

## 2. Create your account

- Use a **personal** email address
- Don't lose your login details – write them on your phone!
- **Home address** is where you call home (usually where your parents live) whilst **Contact Address** is where you'd like any post sent to. This may be your home address, or the school or a guardian - it's up to you!

## 3. Fill in every section

The application is broken down into several sections, all of which need completing before you can submit

- **Personal Details**
  - ▶ The **Next of Kin/Emergency Contact** should be someone they can call if there's an emergency on the day of your audition - often people use the boarding house or a parent
  - ▶ It's always best to be honest about **Disability/Long-Term Health Conditions** as conservatoires are keen to support students with additional needs when it comes to audition, interview and study
- **Residency**
  - ▶ **Area of permanent residence since 1st September 2021:** This must be where you have been living permanently. If you have only been living in the UK during term time (i.e. because you're an international boarder) then you should put down the country of your home address - note that studying full time in the UK **does not** count as residence. UK students should select their respective home nation.
- **Additional Information**
  - ▶ UCAS shares audition data with all conservatoires you apply to automatically but Guildhall does not get access to this. To avoid clashes of audition dates do tick the box and fill in the other conservatoires you're applying for here.



- ▶ Under **Other** you should put your current first study teacher down with London, UK
  - ▶ If you have a preference for a particular teacher at Guildhall you can put their name down here - however this is just an indication of preference and not a guarantee of your being assigned to them
  - ▶ You will be applying for **Year 1** as you won't have studied on an undergraduate course elsewhere beforehand!
  - ▶ If you have any **UK Graded Music Exams (Grades 6 - 8)** you should enter them in the boxes that appear after ticking the checkbox. If you have anything at Diploma level you should wait and put those on the Qualifications page.
- **English Language**
- ▶ If English is not your first language and you haven't yet taken any additional exams (IELTS, CAE etc.) then you should put information in the box provided. If you have taken a test already then you should fill in the details in the appropriate spaces provided alongside a scan of your results.
- **Places of Education**
- ▶ Under Further Education you should search for Purcell and select **11953 Purcell School**
  - ▶ Leave the **University** section blank!
- **Qualifications**
- ▶ If you have GCSEs or iGCSEs tick the box and enter each of them alongside the grade you achieved in the boxes, adding GCSEs as necessary. If you haven't taken any (for example you didn't study in the UK before coming to Purcell for Sixth Form) then you can leave this blank
  - ▶ In the following section you need to tick the box as you **are working towards School level qualifications**. You must enter all the subjects you are taking for A-Level, and any AS-level exams you've already taken - do look at the list of subjects at the end of this booklet if you're not sure what to fill in. Only tick the **Already Achieved?** box if you have sat the exam and received the result
  - ▶ If you have any diploma-level music qualifications (i.e. above Grade 8) you should write them into the final box on this page (Any Other Qualification Information)
- **References**
- ▶ Depending on the course, you may not need referees (not every instrument requires them for Guildhall). If you do, you will be asked to put in details of **two referees**
  - ▶ Your **first (academic) referee** is:
 

<i>Name:</i>	Mr Ziggi Szafranski
<i>Address:</i>	The Purcell School Aldenham Road Bushey WD23 2TS
<i>Phone:</i>	01923 331100
<i>Email:</i>	z.szafranski@purcell-school.org

- ▶ Your **second (practical) referee** is:  
Name: Your Instrumental Teacher  
Address: The Purcell School  
Aldenham Road  
Bushey WD23 2TS  
Phone: 01923 331100  
Email: [i.teacher@purcell-school.org](mailto:i.teacher@purcell-school.org)

- ▶ **Work and Performance Experience**

- ▶ Not everyone will have things to put into this section so don't worry if you don't!
- ▶ This is about work that you've done with orchestras, ensembles and groups **outside of Purcell**.

- ▶ **Personal Statement**

- ▶ Make sure you read the section on personal statements in this booklet before you submit it!
- ▶ The personal statement has space for 4000 characters (including spaces) - but it's worth noting that different word processing software word counts are calculated in slightly different ways! The best way to check is to copy/paste into the box on the application form and preview - it'll tell you what space you've got (or gone over by!)

- ▶ **Confirm and Submit**

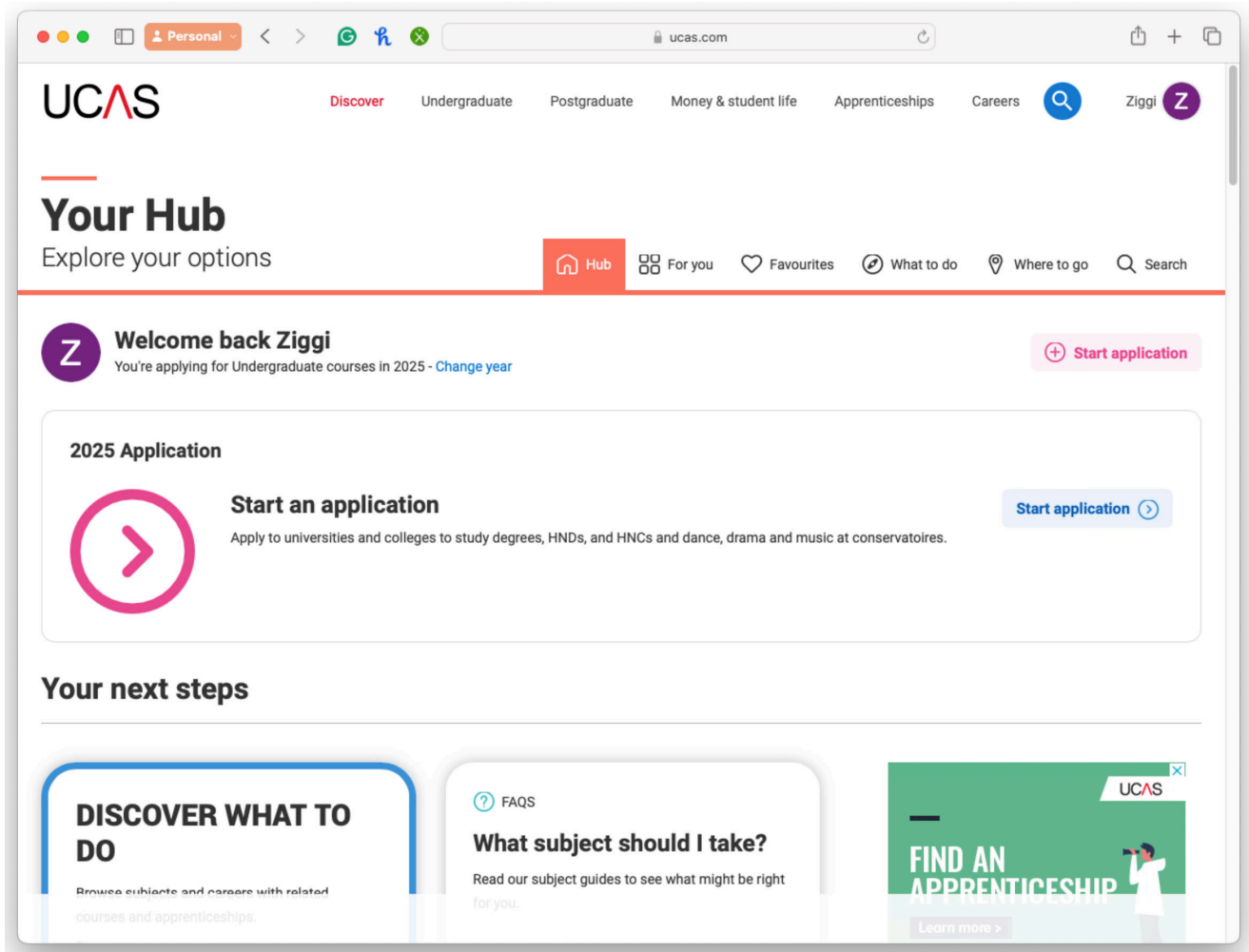
- ▶ If you're under 18 you'll need to confirm with your parent/guardian that they're happy for you to share the data you have done on the application and select this on the form
- ▶ You'll have to pay for the application (the total fee due is shown on this page) which you can do via **credit or debit card** or **PayPal**.
- ▶ However, **before you pay and submit** you need to show your application to Mr Szafranski to check!
- ▶ The easiest way to do this is to click **View Summary** at the top of the application and open every drop-down section by clicking on them. You can then **Print** the page as a PDF document and email it across to Mr Szafranski ([z.szafranski@purcell-school.org](mailto:z.szafranski@purcell-school.org))
- ▶ Failing that, you can always come to see him in person!



# APPLICATION UNIVERSITY

## 1. Register to use the Hub

- <https://www.ucas.com/students>
- Use a **personal** email address
- Don't lose your login details – write them on your phone!
- This is the same account for both conservatoire and university applications



## 2. Start a new application

- You'll be applying to start your studies in **2025** - make sure you select the correct year and that you're interested in **Undergraduate** courses
- You'll see an option for **Undergraduate** - select this as an option and start your application!
- You'll need to put in a **buzzword** in order to link your application to the school. This year the buzzword is **smetana**. If you don't do this in your initial setup you can do it later on your main application page.
- There are questions about nationality, residency, fee status, criminal convictions etc. to answer which you can do at any point between starting your application and completing it.

It's always better to get through it earlier rather than later as it'll take the pressure off you when we get closer to the deadline

### 3. Fill in every section

The application is broken down into several sections, all of which need completing before you can submit

#### → Your Choices

You can add up to **five** choices of university here. They all get the same form sent to them, but they can't see where else you've applied. There is also no ranking involved - it doesn't matter which order you enter them in.

#### → Personal Details

- ▶ You **MUST** use your **FULL LEGAL NAME** - if you don't then the UCAS system won't be able to automatically share your grades with your first choice offer university on results day and this could delay your start date

#### → Nationality details

#### → Where you live

- ▶ If you haven't lived at the same home address for the last three years (i.e. your parents have moved house since 1st September 2022) you'll need to put in all the addresses here.
- ▶ You will need to confirm your **Home address** - this must be where you call home (usually where your parents live) and should **not** be the school's address

#### → Contact Details

- ▶ **Nominated Access:** If you want someone else to be able to access your application or speak on your behalf put them in here - often people either leave it blank or include a parent

#### → Supporting information

#### → Finance and funding

- ▶ It's ok to leave this as 'Not known' for the moment. If you're a UK student and planning on applying for a student loan you should select **UL, ChI, IoM or EU student finance services** and select the local authority where your home address is

#### → Diversity and Inclusion

- ▶ You will need to select an option for **Ethnic origin** (even if the option is 'I prefer not to say') but can choose to leave the others blank. It doesn't matter either way and is for UCAS and the universities to see whether or not they are receiving a diverse range of applications.

#### → More about you

- ▶ If you have anything that you'd like to share regarding additional support you may need either at an interview or whilst studying you should put this in here. It won't negatively impact your application but is designed to help you get the support you need
- ▶ **Education**
  - ▶ Make sure you enter every school you've sat exams in: Purcell (obviously!) and if you did GCSEs elsewhere, for example, pop that school in here as well
  - ▶ Don't worry about your ULN number if you don't have your GCSE certificates to hand - it's ok to leave this blank
  - ▶ If you have sat an IELTS exam you can put the certificate number in here
- ▶ **Qualifications**
  - ▶ Under each school in the Education section you'll see a blue button that says **Add qualification**
  - ▶ You must enter all your qualifications (GCSEs, A-Levels etc.) whether you've taken them, passed them, failed them, or are waiting to take them
  - ▶ You **must** put in your current A-Levels and say that the results are **Pending**. See the last section in this booklet for more information on how to list your subjects
  - ▶ Include music qualifications if you have them!
- ▶ **Employment**
  - ▶ If you have worked a job before (or are working one at the moment) then put the details in here. It doesn't matter if you don't have anything to add!
- ▶ **Personal Statement**
  - ▶ Make sure you read the section on personal statements in this booklet before you submit it!
  - ▶ The personal statement has space for 4000 characters (including spaces) and/or 47 lines - but it's worth noting that different word processing software word counts are calculated in slightly different ways! The best way to check is to copy/paste into the box on the application form and preview - it'll tell you what space you've got left (or gone over by!)
  - ▶ If you want to apply to different courses (for example you're applying to two universities to read history and three to read journalism) you'll still only have one personal statement that all courses will see. You'll need to think carefully about how to appeal to both courses in the one statement, although it's likely that there will be some crossover in your choices which should help!
- ▶ **Extra Activities**
  - ▶ This space is for you to include any activities that you may have done to help prepare you for university. This might include summer schools, taster courses or specific schemes, but should not include general Open days.
  - ▶ It's fine to leave this blank if you haven't attended any of these activities

## ➤ Reference

- ▶ If you can see boxes asking you for details for your referee then you haven't yet gone through the buzzword process. If so, use the link on the right hand side to 'Ask a school, college or centre for a reference' and use the buzzword **smetana**
- ▶ Mr Szafranski will be writing references for all university applications in collaboration with academic, house, tutor and music staff. We can't submit this until you've gone through the Pay and Send process so make sure you leave enough time and let Mr Szafranski know you've done so.

## ➤ Pay and Send (and Check!)

The screenshot shows the 'Application status' bar. On the left, it says 'Centre information' with 'Application linked to Purcell School' and 'Group Default Group'. The progress bar consists of four stages: 'CHOICES' (1/5), 'PROFILE' (100%), 'PERSONAL STATEMENT' (with a checkmark), and 'SEND FROM 3 SEPTEMBER' (with a clock icon). A blue button labeled 'Review and submit' with a right arrow is at the bottom right.

- ▶ Once you're finished with your form, on the main Application Overview page you'll see the Application status bar at the top:
- ▶ You'll need to click the **Review and Submit** button which will take you to two declaration pages and then the payment page
- ▶ Once you've paid (by credit or debit card) the application will come to Mr Szafranski to review and accept. There is only one fee to pay to UCAS of £28.50 regardless of the number of choices you make. If there are any errors or omissions he'll send it back to you to make the changes. **Don't leave this until the last minute in case there are problems to solve** - and don't just submit and run off to BML without getting confirmation from Mr Szafranski that it's been submitted as you'll have to run back rather quickly to fix the problem!

# The UK's Largest Universities by Undergraduate Entrants



Data taken from [www.hesa.ac.uk](http://www.hesa.ac.uk) 2021/22 academic year data of first degree entrants

# APPLICATION **US COMMON APP**

The Common Application (Common App) is used by over 900 American universities. It is somewhat like UCAS in that you will save time by being able to complete information and essays that you can submit to multiple universities. However, bear in mind that approximately two-thirds of universities ask for supplemental information and/or essays. The Fulbright Commission has more information on applications, but here is a pretty comprehensive breakdown of how to apply on the Common App.

## *Things to know:*

- Unlike UCAS, you apply to each US university separately
- Universities will have their own application deadlines, fees and requirements
- You apply to the university, college or school as an undergraduate, not to a specific degree
- Offers of admission aren't specifically conditional - if they admit you, they expect you to continue working towards your current level, but won't specify required grades
- The slightly longer applications allow you to fully express and discuss why you are a suitable applicant. Each part of your application is taken in context and reviewed holistically.

If you've done your research and have chosen suitable universities, you stand every chance of being an attractive applicant to the admissions committee.

## *The Application Process*

Like most application processes, there are several steps to go through before you submit. What follows here is a breakdown of the individual sections on the application with guidance on how to complete it. The [Common App YouTube channel](#) has a lot more information on it, but remember this is geared towards US applicants so not everything will necessarily be relevant to you.

### **1. Registration**

The first step to completing the Common Application (Common App) is registering on their website ([www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org)). When registering, use a professional email address (example: [hotguy88@hotmail.com](mailto:hotguy88@hotmail.com) would not be appropriate but [MrSmith@hotmail.com](mailto:MrSmith@hotmail.com) would) as universities will be able to see it. Leave State/Province blank if you live outside of the United States. (The system allows you to use postcodes to do an address search. However, you should delete the postcode column before clicking "Next" as UK postcodes will return as invalid.)

### **2. Email Confirmation**

Make sure to write down your **username** (i.e., the email address you used to create your account) and **password**, as you can sign in and out of the Common App as many times as you like, saving



your work each time. After registering, you will be sent a confirmation email, but this password is not included.

### 3. Instructions

After logging in, be sure to explore the **Instructions and Help** toolbar along the right-hand side of the home page dashboard, which has helpful information on how to complete your application. If you click the search sign on the top right corner, you can type specific questions or browse all help topics on the Student's Solutions Center Website. You can also use the Live Chat function on the Student Solutions Center to troubleshoot with a digital assistant or send an email for support. Familiarise yourself with the Common App website and how to use the tabs along the top of the screen to move between sections.

### 4. Find your colleges

Under "College Search" you will find and select the college to which you will apply. Remember that the words "college" and "university" both refer to places of post-secondary education in US English. To populate the "My Colleges" section as well as see your applications on your Dashboard, you will need to select the colleges you wish to attend using the "College Search" tool. You can search for the colleges you want either by name or city, while using "more filters" to narrow your search based on criteria such as which state they are in, whether they require standardised test results, etc. You can use your Result List to investigate the colleges further.

If you click on the university name, you will see the university's profile, which includes the university's contact information, application deadlines, and application requirements. You can also explore further aspects of the university using the links to their official website and social media provided on this page. If after exploring the profile you decide you would like to apply to this university, you must either:

- a. Click the 'Add to My Colleges' button above or below the profile, or
- b. Go back to your Result List, click the "Add" button to the left of the university's name.

It will now be available in your "My Colleges" section as well as your dashboard. Once you add that university, return to the "College Search" tab to add any additional universities to which you plan to apply.

To further compare the requirements of different colleges, click on the "Application Requirements" button to generate a list that includes the school's application deadlines, fees, and whether it requires standardised testing score, writing supplements or recommendations. You can see this list for schools you've added to "My Colleges" only or all schools in the common application system. Once your application process starts, you can check back on this page to keep track of upcoming deadlines and work to be done for each school.

### 5. Common App tab

Before exploring further into the "My Colleges" tab, you should complete information about yourself in the "Common App" tab. There are seven main sections, which can be found on the

left-hand sidebar: Profile, Family, Education, Testing, Activities, Writing, and Courses and Grades. Much like UCAS, you only have to complete this information once for all the universities you want to apply to.

## **b. Profile**

Once you click on the “Profile” section, you will see some sub-categories. As you complete each sub-category and click the “Continue” button, a small green tick will appear on that tab to indicate that you have submitted all required information. In the “Contact Details” subcategory, make sure to enter your mobile or home number with the country code (+44). It would be helpful to put both a mobile and home phone number.

In the “Demographics” sub-category, these questions are for statistical purposes and to demonstrate diversity. It is okay to leave them blank if you’re uncomfortable filling them in. In the “Geography and Nationality” sub-category, select “0” for the “Number of years you have lived in the United States” if you’ve never lived in the USA. For the “Number of years you have lived outside of the United States”, select the number that corresponds with your age.

As you proceed through the sub-categories, you will notice that the tips provided under the Instructions and Help toolbar will change according to the section you are in. For example, in the “Language” sub-category, you are asked to list the number of languages you are proficient in, and the Instructions and Help provides an answer about what proficiency means for the Common App purposes.

In the “Citizenship” sub-category, you will be asked to provide information about your background. If you are a UK citizen, select this option. If you do not hold a valid US visa, select no.

When asked if you intend to apply for a US visa, select **F1-Student visa**. If you are not a UK citizen, select your country of citizenship. If you hold a current B-2 visa, select this as an option.

## **7. Common App Fee Waiver**

In the final sub-category of the Profile section, you will be asked whether you are requesting a Common App Fee Waiver. A fee waiver lets you apply to a college without paying an application fee. The Common App Fee Waiver waives application fee of any college you apply to through Common App.

To apply for this fee waiver:

- a. Answer "Yes" to the fee waiver statement.
- b. Select all the indicators in the list that apply to you
- c. Enter your signature to certify your request.

This request will come to Mr Szafranski to approve (to the best of his knowledge). It is important that before you apply to universities you check with Mr Szafranski and make sure that he has logged in and approved it. You will not be required to provide them with any documentation.

The Common App Fee Waiver isn’t the only fee waiver available to you. Many colleges also offer their own application fee waiver, specific to their school. Be sure to check with each college to

understand their own fee waiver policies. If you do not request a fee waiver in your Common App, you will submit and pay online using a credit or debit card.

## 8. Family

In this section you will be providing information on your family and their education. The US admission process is holistic, taking into account a range of factors in addition to your academics. This information will provide some context about your background for the admissions office. The first sub-category in the Family section is about your household. This section allows you to categorise the relationship your parents have. You will then provide additional information about your parents individually in the next two sub-categories. If you indicate that your parent was educated to college level (university), you will then be asked questions about that university. Note that many universities outside of the US are not on the provided list. You can still manually enter the information for those. Complete the rest of the section for both parents/legal guardians and any siblings

**Note:** If you live with only one parent, be sure that the information you provide for this parent matches up with the answer you provided in this “Household” section. You will be required to select each parent’s occupation and highest educational level from a dropdown menu. Note that “trade school” means vocational certification or equivalent in the UK.

## 9. Education

For the first sub-category of this section (“Current or Most Recent School”) you will submit information about Purcell. As before, when you click on “Find School,” a new screen will pop up that allows you to search for the institution by name, address, country, or city. If we are not already on the list, you can select the option that says, “I don’t see my high school on this list”, and you will be able to manually input your school’s information. For “Graduation Date” enter the date you will receive official results for A-levels, including any AS-levels you have sat already. Under the question “Please indicate if any of these options will have affected your progression through or since secondary/high school”, if applicable, choose all the options that apply to you and then provide a detailed clarification in the box below. This is **only** for students who have repeated a year, taken a gap year, or else had other significant interruption to their schooling. If you have not had any interruptions or delays in your education, select “no change in progression”.

**Note:** GED is a US High School equivalency exam.

You will then be asked for the details of your Counsellor recommender. Remember that your guidance counsellor will submit a school profile, transcript, and evaluation on your performance in a broader manner through the School/Final Reports. This will be **Mr Szafranski**

([z.szafranski@purcell-school.org](mailto:z.szafranski@purcell-school.org))

For the “Other secondary/high schools” section, please complete information for any secondary school you have attended since Year 10 in the UK. If you have not changed schools since Year 10, select “0” to indicate this. For the “College & Universities” section, keep in mind that the American term “course” is the equivalent of “classes” or “modules” and that the American term “colleges” is used to mean “universities.” Also note that ninth grade is equivalent to Year 10 in the UK.

## 10. Grades

In the grades section, most students will select 'none' for 'class rank reporting'. You should also select 'none' for GPA Scale reporting and leave the 'Cumulative GPA' section blank. **Please do not try and convert your GPA.**

Under "Current or Most Recent Year Courses" (qualifications and subjects), for "How many courses would you like to report?" you should first select the number of courses (i.e. subjects) you will receive results for in Year 13. If one of your courses has a level designation that is not included in the choice list, please include the level as part of the Course title (for example: "A-level French"). For selecting the course scheduling system your institution is using, there is the option of either "semester" or "trimester" - we use trimesters (i.e. three terms). For "course level", select AS/A-Level. For "Course 1 Schedule", if your subjects will be the same all year (most likely), tick the option for "Full Year". If you will change through the year, select the appropriate term length for each course you report.

## 11. Honors

Under "Honors," submit information about any academic honours you have received. When filling out this section, please note that Grade Level 9, 10, 11 and 12 will correspond to English/Welsh Year 10, 11, 12 and 13 (GCSEs and A-levels). You can report up to five honours in this section. and will be able to click more than one box if the honours are recognized at more than one level.

## 12. Community-Based Organizations

Community-Based Organizations are non-for profit organisations and college access programs that help students become college-ready. They can include charter school networks, local education foundations, federal, state and local programs that aid students from low-income families. Students who receive free college preparation support from a CBO can include those details in this section. You can include up to 3 organisations.

## 13. Future plans

For the "Future Plans" section, it's OK to be undecided about your career interests under the liberal arts philosophy followed in the US system. While there is not an undecided choice, "other" is an option.

## 14. Testing

Under "Tests Taken", you can report your best SAT or ACT scores. If you don't have your scores before you submit the application, you can enter the date on which you will take the exam. Please note that even though you are entering the scores into the Common App you will still need to send your official scores directly from College Board or ACT to the colleges where you are applying. Check with each individual university regarding what admissions tests they require, some universities might be **test-optional**, which means you do not have to take or submit your SAT or ACT scores.

When you select "Yes" to self-report your standardised test scores, you will be able to select ALL

the tests you've taken or expect to take from a list. Once you enter a test in this list, a new section will appear at the bottom of the screen with that test's name. When you click on that section, you will then be able to provide your scores. For international applicants, an additional question is asked in the "Tests Taken" section. As admittance to university/higher education is normally dependent on A-Level grades, IB Scores etc, most UK students should check 'Yes'.

For "Senior Secondary Leaving Examinations", you should **only** select yes if you have already sat an official A-level exam. Don't enter predicted grades - these go through on your academic transcript. You also shouldn't report GCSE or AS results as they will also be included on your transcript.

## 15. Activities

Under Activities, report any extracurricular activities you have completed in school or in your community. You can list up to 10 Activities. A few examples: school clubs or activities, school leadership roles (Head Boy/Girl), sports you participate in at school or recreationally, arts lessons or performances, voluntary service, work experience and internships. In the drop-down menu from which you choose your activity, JV/Varsity means that it was a High School level team (equivalent to the last four years of secondary school in British education) as opposed to a professional or recreational team. If you can't find your activity, choose "Other Club/Activity." Also note that on the application, Grade Level 9, 10, 11, and 12 correspond to British Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 (GCSE years and Sixth Form).

Your response in the 'Position/Leadership description and organization name' section will be limited to 50 characters. Your character limit for "please describe this activity, including what you accomplished and any recognition you received, etc" is 150 characters. In choosing to add more activities to your applications (you can include up to 10 activities), you may wish to reorder them at the end in order of importance, with the most important as Activity 1. You can do so using the Up and Down arrows in the top right corner of the activity box.

## 16. Writing

In the "Personal Essay" section, you will have a personal essay to complete that will be sent to all the universities that you apply for through the Common Application. Do not make your personal essay specific to one college as you will be able to do that in the supplements. Though they're called 'essays' they are really more like extended paragraphs so you'll need to be concise! Make sure you share them with members of staff the same way you would your personal statement if applying to study in the UK.

## 17. The Covid-19 question

You should only answer this question if the pandemic has affected you extremely negatively on a personal level. General circumstances such as classes being moved online, or exams being cancelled do not need to be addressed here. If you feel like your situation is too complicated to be explained within 250 words, you might also consider addressing it in the larger "Additional Information section". Ask Mr Szafranski for guidance before you choose to do either of the above.

## 18. Courses and Grades

Some universities now require students to fill out this section. Since most students in the UK do not have a year-by-year transcript starting Grade 9 (Year 10), we advise you to choose “No” for “I can access a copy of my transcript(s) or official grades” instead of trying to manually enter all your grades.

## 19. My Colleges (continued)

In order to submit your application, you must first complete the university-specific questions and assign your recommenders for each college. You may also be required to complete a university-specific supplement for those that require them. In the “My Colleges” tab, select “Questions” from the panel on the left side of the college from your list that you are applying to.

## 20. FERPA

In this section, you will authorise the school to release your academic information. General guidance strongly recommends that you waive your right to access in the Privacy Notice to maintain the credibility of your recommendation letters in the eyes of the university. Then you will e-sign and date the form.

## 21. Adding an advisor

In this section you can select to add an advisor. An advisor is a type of recommender for your Common App. If you receive support from advising and community-based organisations, you will be able to work with those counsellors just as you work with Mr Szafranski and other teachers within the application. Advisors will then be able to manage their caseloads and view student progress within the Common App recommendation system. You can invite up to 3 individuals to be an advisor and they do not need to be from your school or have a special address. You should consider inviting those who are helping you manage and complete your college application process. In addition, if you wish to do so, you will be able to share a view of your in-progress application with your school counsellor, advisor, or mentor. The advisor cannot make any changes to your application, they can only view the answers you've provided. If you choose to invite an advisor, that action will remain private. The advisor invitation and profile information will not be visible to any of your colleges or any other invited recommender.



## APPLICATION US (OTHER), EUROPE ETC.

For all other applications, whether to European universities or conservatoires, or to US universities and conservatories that don't use the Common App, there is no single how-to guide we can give you. Each one manages it differently through their own application systems. You'll need to research for each place you want to apply exactly what is required and when.

Generally, European applications and auditions take place later in the year, between February and June, but there is no fixed deadline unlike with UCAS or the US deadlines.

If you are thinking of going down this route, make sure you speak with Mr Szafranski well in advance so that we can talk through next steps.

## WHAT ABOUT APPRENTICESHIPS?

An apprenticeship is an opportunity to work and study at the same time. Most of your time is spent doing on-the-job training, and the rest is spent working towards a qualification. You'll get paid a salary and be part of a team, just like a standard employee, but you'll also get dedicated study time throughout the week.

The qualification you can achieve could vary from the equivalent of GCSEs to a master's degree depending on the level of apprenticeship you take. There are different types or levels of apprenticeships depending on where you are in the UK. Each level apprenticeship will have different entry requirements.

For those who feel like they need to step away from an education institution for a time, apprenticeships are a great way to do this. There are apprenticeships in all fields and it is often the only way to start a career in certain fields. There are apprenticeships available in digital media, production and technology; in instrument making and repair; there is so much out there that it's well worth an explore: [UCAS Apprenticeships](#).

## WHAT ABOUT TAKING A YEAR OUT?

For some people, the idea of going straight from school to a university or conservatoire can be pretty daunting. There is nothing wrong with wanting to take a year out - and in some cases it might be a good idea.

If you are thinking about taking a year off, what's known as a Gap year, please come and see Mr Szafranski to talk through your options, as well as some things to think about if this is the case. We'll still be here to support any applications you make for higher education once you've left Purcell though, don't worry!

# AUDITIONS GUIDE

Every application to conservatoire made on time is guaranteed an audition. Different conservatoires will manage their audition process slightly differently so you need to check their websites for up to date information.

## *When are they?*

Auditions usually start in mid-November and run until mid-December. Most conservatoires will have specific days for instrumental departments but you may not be auditioning on the same day as your friends. Depending on how they allocate times you may not hear at the same time as someone else who has also applied - this doesn't mean anything other than where you are on the list they got from UCAS!

It's also worth noting that the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland will usually send a representative to Purcell in early December to audition here and save you the cost (and hassle!) of flying up to Glasgow!

## *Will they know about each other?*

Yes; unlike university applications, conservatoires see everywhere else you have applied so that they can arrange auditions that don't clash. You may find that London conservatoires will arrange your auditions on the same or consecutive days to minimise travel.

## *What does the audition look like?*

Usually there will be two parts - the **practical** audition and the **interview**. The actual format varies from place to place but you can expect to perform your repertoire (some of which you'll have to choose from specific lists), do some sight reading or improvisation, and speak with members of the admissions team. They will often pick out things from your personal statement to discuss with you, or will refer to your choice of repertoire.

## *When do I hear back?*

Again there's no specific deadline for hearing back from them, but you can usually expect to have heard from them by early January. They will make offers at different times for different instruments and different people, so don't worry if you haven't heard back and someone else who auditioned on the same instrument has. They will get back to you eventually and waiting longer doesn't necessarily mean it's bad news!





# PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Every course you apply for, whether conservatoire or university, will need you to talk about yourself. Usually this is called a Personal Statement, although there may be different terms for non-UK Conservatoires or Universities. A good statement contains lots of tangible achievements and experiences that panel members can draw upon in their interviews. Statements that speak vaguely of passion for a subject, but lack detail and specifics are less useful.

## *Why is it important?*

- It helps you stand out from others with similar grades
- It shows you are motivated and dedicated
- It shows you have relevant knowledge and experience
- It shows that you understand the demands of the course
- It shows you will fit into the university/conservatoire environment
- It tells them why you want to study the course

## *Is there anything I need to know about the practicalities of writing it?*

- Leave plenty of time to write it! It is really important in showing why you'd make a great student and will likely need several redrafts until you're happy with it
- You have 4000 characters (not words, so includes spaces) or 47 lines of text, whichever comes first
- No formatting such as **bold**, underline or *italics*
- Avoid using any non-standard characters (i.e. anything other than . , ; #)
  - ▶ £ signs will be replaced by GBP and this can impact the character count.
- There is no inbuilt spelling and grammar check; any issues flagged will have been flagged by, and in line with, the internet browser settings of the computer you are using
- Character counts could be different on UCAS compared to the software/computer you are using, and needs to match UCAS settings. You can write your personal statement outside of the UCAS form itself, in a programme like Microsoft Word or Notepad, and then copy it in when you're happy with the content.
- Make a note of the course descriptions and modules offered to help you decide what to write about
  - they mention the qualities, skills and experience that the institution would like you to have
    - ▶ Don't write about a particular aspect of the subject that you are passionate about studying if one of your choices doesn't offer it!

- The same personal statement gets sent everywhere you apply, so it's best not to identify specific institutions in your personal statement. If you're wanting to apply to different subjects/courses you will only have one statement to talk about all of them

## *What should I focus on?*

- Passion for the subject
- Work experience/courses/masterclasses
- TED Talks or podcasts
- Articles, books, journal & reading lists
- Apply current affairs to the course

## *Dos and Don'ts*

### **Do:**

- Write positively (& persuasively)
- Evidence your why
- Write in plain English
- Draft, re-draft and proofread
- Think (and write!) about your personal accomplishments, as well as your ambitions and goals
- Try to get across your enthusiasm and passion for the subject
- Proofread aloud and get your teachers, Mr Szafranski and your family to check – then redraft until you're happy with it

### **Don't:**

- Write lists
- Leave it to the last minute
- Have spelling and grammar mistakes
- Over-use quotes
- Write one large paragraph – split the information up
- Be tempted to copy: UCAS scans all personal statements with the Copycatch system to compare them with previous statements. Any similarity greater than 30% will be flagged and action could be taken against you. Also remember that both universities and conservatoires use their own systems to check - you will get found out!

## *Can I just get AI to write it for me?*

It's not worth the risk. Universities and conservatoires have been collating personal statements for years and all personal statements are checked against a library of previously submitted ones, sample statements on various websites, other resources and publications, as well as using AI detection software. Remember that this is your chance to show them who you are and why they should accept you as a student - if they think you're going to get someone or something else to do your work for you then they're not going to want to accept you on to their course!

## *What about conservatoires? Do they want something different?*

As well as the main elements that need to be considered for a general undergraduate personal statement, for conservatoires you need to think about what other specific things they may be looking for.

Think about including the following:

- Why you're applying – your ambitions and what interests you about the subject, conservatoires and higher education.
- Your reasons for choosing the courses you've listed. Remember that each conservatoire will be able to see the other conservatoires and courses you've applied to, so explain why you've chosen those courses.
- What interests you about your chosen study area
- Your experience within your chosen specialist area and in any other activity related to the course(s) for which you've applied.
- What makes you suitable – for example, competitions, concerts, schemes, summer schools, memberships of national/international orchestras, choirs or chamber groups (such as NYO, EUYO or National Youth Theatre) and any other relevant skills and achievements gained from education, work or other activities.

The main elements that comprise a conservatoire personal statement are:

- your personal statement
- your portfolio
- evidence or work experience, exam and course grades, awards/recognition
- Other facets of your personality within conservatoire applications – include your hobbies, interests, and achievements outside of your subject – but also remember to include the parts of yourself that are related to the course.

## How do I structure it?

Structure your information to reflect the skills and experience conservators value most. Keep it simple: write in an enthusiastic, concise and natural style – nothing too complex. Remember that this is your voice that they want to hear, so don't try and sound like someone you're not.

However, you do need to make yourself stand out from the crowd. Each course will be heavily oversubscribed and you need to make sure that the admissions officers want to meet you - but be careful with humour, quotes or anything unusual – just in case the admissions tutor doesn't have the same sense of humour as you!

You don't need to follow this structure exactly, but many people find it to be a useful starting point:

### 1. Writing about the course

This is the section to talk about why you want to take this course and what you've done in relation to the subject you're proud of. Tutors ask you to get across a sense of enthusiasm and passion for your subject. Include why you're interested in studying at a conservatoire/university. Are there any aspects you can include that tell the tutors about your character, spirit, and attitude towards life and learning?

### 2. Skills and achievements

For this section, tutors told us they like to see what you've done with your time outside of the subjects you studied and any school-led activities. Tell them what you've done in your own time – show evidence of independent learning and the motivation to commit time to what you want to do. Extracurricular activities are also great ways to prepare for higher education. If you do or have done any of these before, they could be ideal things to mention in your personal statement. You might be able to organise or start a new activity before you send your application.

### 3. Work experience and future plans

As well as hearing about your extracurricular activities, tutors want to know what you're hoping to do in the future, so tell them about your work experience and your creative ambitions.

- a. What experience do you already have?
- b. How will studying at a conservatoire/university help with your career ambitions?
- c. What achievements and experiences might you be able to talk about in your interview?

## Anything else?!

Proof read, proof read, proof read, and then proof read some more, and then get ANYBODY YOU CAN to read it and give feedback. Your tutors, Mr Hoskins and Mr Szafranski are all more than happy to help. It's also useful to get more opinions from different people - we may not all agree completely but it might help you make up your mind if there are different suggestions!

# FINANCE, SUPPORT AND VISAS

## *Student Finance in 30 Seconds*

- Student Finance (funded by the government) helps UK-resident students from any financial background to go to university or conservatoire
- The Student Finance package includes a loan for course fees, plus a means-tested Maintenance Loan or Grant to cover living costs
- Institutions can charge up to £9,250 a year in tuition fees, but you'll pay nothing upfront if you're eligible for Student Finance in the UK
- You could get extra cash if a health condition, childcare costs or clinical placements leave you out of pocket while studying, or financial support if you're struggling to get by
- You or your parents may be expected to chip in for maintenance support (i.e. living costs). You (and they!) will need to plan for this!
- Student Finance has to be paid back, but don't let that put you off. Student Loan repayments work more like a graduate tax, which is far easier to manage than normal loan repayments
- You only make Student Loan repayments once you've left your course AND are earning enough. Repayments vary with your salary and stop altogether if your income drops too low
- The Student Loan currently charges 7.9% interest
- But, crucially, many loans may be written off anyway before they're fully repaid. If you're not a big earner after uni you may only pay back a fraction of what you borrow from Student Finance
- For the most part, Student Finance is reserved for UK students, but some exceptions apply for those with pre-settled or settled status who have lived permanently in the UK for the last three years (i.e. not just for school)
- Almost all students can get a bite at funding beyond Student Finance, from bursaries and scholarships to charity and corporate cash

## *Who can get student loans?*

There are almost as many rules about who can get Student Finance as there are Subway sandwich combos!

At its simplest, you should be eligible for tuition AND maintenance support if you're studying an approved course at a registered institution and haven't previously started a degree or similar course. You'll also need to be a UK citizen (or have 'settled' status) and have been living here for at least three years before your course start date.

While Irish students can apply for the Tuition Fee Loan, they won't usually get help paying living costs.

Rules and amounts also vary if you're a part-time student, over 60, at a private uni, or claiming special circumstances such as refugee status. Contact Student Finance to flesh out the extra details for yourself.

### *What funding is available if you can't get Student Finance?*

Universities and conservatoires offer a mix of scholarships, bursaries, fee waivers and hardship (emergency) funds. Some charities, companies, councils and professional bodies also award grants and financial support: it's possible to dig up hidden funding for everything from spiritual or ethical beliefs to what your parents do for a living.

If you can't get (or don't want) Student Finance, make sure your salary, savings, family support or other finance is enough to cover the cost of studying.

You can also speak with **Mr Harbour** in the Development Office at school for advice on additional funding applications and private funds - his office is just opposite Room 112.

### *What about visas?*

If you're not a British citizen or have settled status, you'll need to apply for a Student visa to study in the UK providing you:

- have been offered a place on a course by a licensed student sponsor (i.e. university or conservatoire)
- have enough money to support yourself and pay for your course - the amount will vary depending on your circumstances (you may have to prove that you have the funds available before you apply)
- can speak, read, write and understand English

When you can apply depends on whether you're applying from inside or outside the UK.

For most students who need visas, you'll have one already for your studies at Purcell. If you do have a visa at the moment, the earliest you can apply is 3 months before your course starts (usually July). You **must** apply before your current visa expires. Your new course must begin within 28 days of your current visa expiring and you'll usually get a decision within 8 weeks.

You can find out more from the UK Government website here: <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa>



# USEFUL INFORMATION

## Qualifications taken at The Purcell School

Below you'll find a list of subjects offered at Purcell for GCSE and A-Level. Obviously, if you didn't sit your GCSEs here, then the board and/or qualification date may be different, but this should give you a starting point.

When it comes to entering your qualifications into the UCAS form, you'll need to search for a qualification type first (e.g. AS Level (GCE Advanced Subsidiary) - the top of each table has the one to use) and then enter the information given. You may find that some qualifications offered by CIE might need to be entered as CAIE as they have changed their name - they are the same exam board though!

The tables below break down the options as follows:

Subject Title	Awarding Organisation	Qualification Date	Grade
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**Remember:** you **must** include your current A-Levels in your application as otherwise they'll think you're not studying anything - not helpful when you need A-Levels to get an offer! The grade will be 'Pending' as you've not sat them yet, but needs to be in there nonetheless.

### A Level (GCE Advanced Level)

Music	OCR	June 2025	Pending
Art	AQA		
Biology	AQA		
Chemistry	AQA		
Drama and Theatre	Edexcel		
English Literature	OCR		
French	Edexcel		
German	AQA		
History	AQA		
Mathematics	Edexcel		
Music Technology	Edexcel		
Physics	CIE		

### AS Level (GCE Advanced Subsidiary)

Physics	CIE	June 2024	Your Grade result
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### GCSE (9-1)

Art and Design	AQA	June 2023	Your Grade result
Combined Science (Trilogy)	AQA		

<b>Drama</b>	Eduqas		
<b>French</b>	Edexcel		
<b>German</b>	Edexcel		
<b>Mathematics</b>	Edexcel		

### International GCSE

<b>Music</b>	CIE	November 2022	<i>Your Grade result</i>
<b>English First Language</b>	CIE	June 2023	
<b>English Literature</b>	CIE		
<b>English Second Language</b>	CIE		

### International GCSE (9-1)

<b>History</b>	PEARSON (Edexcel)	June 2023	<i>Your Grade result</i>
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## Useful Websites

UCAS (for all information on applications!)	<a href="http://www.ucas.com">www.ucas.com</a>
UCAS Student Hub	<a href="http://www.ucas.com/hub">www.ucas.com/hub</a>
UCAS Careers Quiz	<a href="http://www.ucas.com/careers-quiz">www.ucas.com/careers-quiz</a>
Conservatoires UK (representative body)	<a href="https://conservatoiresuk.ac.uk">https://conservatoiresuk.ac.uk</a>
Fulbright Commission (for US applications)	<a href="http://www.fulbright.org.uk">www.fulbright.org.uk</a>
UK Government pages on visas	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/student-visa">www.gov.uk/student-visa</a>
UK Government pages on student finance	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/student-finance">www.gov.uk/student-finance</a>
Student Finance England (for student loans)	<a href="http://www.slc.co.uk">www.slc.co.uk</a>
US Common Application YouTube Channel	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/CommonAppMedia">https://www.youtube.com/user/CommonAppMedia</a>
Royal Academy of Music	<a href="http://www.ram.ac.uk">www.ram.ac.uk</a>
Royal College of Music	<a href="http://www.rcm.ac.uk">www.rcm.ac.uk</a>
Royal Northern College of Music	<a href="http://www.rncm.ac.uk">www.rncm.ac.uk</a>
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama	<a href="http://www.rwcmd.ac.uk">www.rwcmd.ac.uk</a>
Royal Birmingham Conservatoire	<a href="http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire">www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire</a>
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	<a href="http://www.rcs.ac.uk">www.rcs.ac.uk</a>
Guildhall School of Music and Drama	<a href="http://www.gsmd.ac.uk">www.gsmd.ac.uk</a>