

Hyndland Secondary School



College Application Advice

Useful hints and tips for S6 Students

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*Videos and information relating to
College Applications will be posted
here*

Introduction

Applying to college can be a frightening and stressful experience. Sometimes people are ready to move on to the next part of their education however for others, it is not that easy. Choosing the right college and applying to the right courses is vital to make sure that when you eventually attend the college, you get the most out of it and it is a memorable experience.

Traditionally, some people view applying to college meaning that you are not good enough to attend university— THIS IS NOT THE CASE!! Colleges provide an opportunity for you to sample the types of subjects that you think you may wish to study further as well as open up other avenues for you to gain more qualifications and make the successful transition to university. Nowadays, some colleges have great links with universities allowing them to offer degrees with most colleges having excellent articulation programmes. This is when a student leaves school, completes their qualifications at college, usually to HND level which in turn means that they gain access in either the first or second year of a degree with which the college has the programme established with.

There are various qualifications that you can study at college and access to these is dependent on the number of qualifications and experience that you have. Below demonstrates the qualifications that you can take;

- National Qualifications
- City and Guilds Vocational Courses
- Access Courses
- Modules
- Higher National Certificates (HNC's)
- Higher National Diploma's (HND's)

This booklet has been created in order to assist you with the process of applying to college. The booklet includes the necessary information to help you with the process, however it is by no means definitive. You should feel free to include or exclude any of the information that you feel does not apply to you.

There are 2 different starting dates for colleges, these are;

- Courses with a January start.
- Courses with an August start.

As courses at college are usually allocated on a 'first come first served' basis, it is important that you apply as early as possible. The opening date for applications for some colleges is October 2014 with other courses allowing applicants to apply from January 2015. This varies from college to college therefore, it is worth checking out the website for the college you are wishing to apply for.

Choosing a College Course

There is lots and lots of information out there about choosing the right course and college for you. We would recommend in order to gain a true flavour of the college and what the course offers, that you arrange to visit the college. This can usually be done if there is an 'open day' when courses usually show off what their courses can offer as well as gain a feel for the college. Some of the other ways we would recommend to find out more about the college and courses would be;

- Go on line—If you have access to the internet, log on to the college website and find out what you can about the college.
- Look at prospectuses—Look through the prospectuses of the college to see if there are any courses that you like. Most prospectuses are available on line now.
- Attend conventions—The school will arrange for them to attend college conventions. This is when all the colleges come together in the one place. It is like a one stop shop where you can speak to the representatives from each of the colleges and ask questions about courses etc. (You usually get freebies at these events)
- Make use of the My World Of Work Website—There is a host of information on this website including videos and testimonials of people who are at college and their experience. There is also lots of valuable information to assist with the application process.
- Arrange to see a Career Advisor—If you are really struggling with the application process or really not sure about what course suite you (having made good use of the tools on My World of Work), speak to your Guidance Teacher who will arrange for you to meet with the careers advisor. Kate McMahon is our school Career's Advisor.
- Speak to our school's Employability Officer Ms Currie – she can help advise on courses / entry requirements etc. You can access her via your Pastoral Care Teacher.
- Think about any work experience that you have had—If you have participated in Work Experience placements and enjoyed them, why not look for courses in this field. It may be an unidentified interest that you have.
- Don't restrict yourself to the local area—in today's tough economic climate, it is becoming increasingly difficult to get in to college and university courses, with each place being very competitively fought for.
- Speak to parents/guardian/employers/friends—People that you know will have possibly already of been to college and they will be able to tell you about their experience.

Also, the following websites provide useful information that may be beneficial to you on deciding which course to apply for;

<http://www.scottishdegrees.com/>

<http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/>

Qualifications and Applying

Applying to college can be done in a couple of ways. Some colleges only accept online applications via the college website and others paper forms. Some colleges accept both so it is important that you check the college website before applying. There is no restriction to the number of colleges or courses that you can apply for however, you need to fill out a separate application for each course. It is therefore worth saving your 'personal statement' on a word document. This will mean that should you need to change your personal statement for any application it will be easier to do so as well as you have it to copy and paste in to any application that you make. Also, it is important that if you have any type of additional support need, that you put this on the form. This will enable the college to ensure that you are supported during the application process but also, if successful, through your college course.

In preparation for your application, make sure that you have to hand, your most recent SQA certificate listing your qualifications, your Scottish Candidate Number, an appropriate e-mail address (DO NOT USE SOMETHING INAPPROPRIATE LIKE big_mad_mental_matt@hotmail.com), information about any work placement you have done or jobs that you have, as well as any other information about yourself that you think will be important and help your application.

It is important that as part of the process, you may be required to submit a portfolio, or attend an interview. You should speak to your Pastoral Care Teacher if this is the case as they will help you prepare for this.

Personal Statement General Advice

Your personal statement is the part of your application which allows you to explain about your reasons for applying for a particular course/courses as well as explaining the skills and abilities that make you stand out from the crowd.

The basics

- No spell check so write in word and copy over.

What should your Personal Statement be?

Your Personal Statement should:

- Be clear and Concise
- Reflect your commitment and suitability for the course
- Be correctly spelled
- Be grammatically accurate
- “Sell” you to the College

What are colleges looking for?

Colleges are looking for your personal statement to:

- Display maturity—show that you are ready for college
- Display ability—show that you have the academic and personal skills and ability to go to college.
- Display commitment—show that you have the dedication, reliability and suitability to go to college.
- Display knowledge—show that you have an awareness and familiarity with the subject area and courses that you are applying for.

Things that will help

In reading your personal statement, colleges will expect you to:

- Display an insight into what the course or ultimate career goal is actually about.
- Show that research into the course/career has been done.

Hints and Tips

- Don't be shy and retiring in what you are saying about yourself.
- The best personal statements are the ones that sound genuine.
- Consistency in your course choice makes the personal statement easier to write.
- You may need to write a few drafts in order to get it right.
- Get someone to look over it.
- Ask yourself if it makes sense? Does it flow? Can you say “so what?” to anything in it?, have you shown that you are a reflective thinker? (You can detail the experiences you have had and the skills you have gained from them.) Have you worked out what information is the most important and 'adds value' to what is being discussed in your statement? Have you shown evidence to demonstrate this?
- Don't use language that does not sound natural to you. If you wouldn't say it, think about why you want to write it.

What makes an effective personal statement?

An effective personal statement should:

- Discuss your choice of course - what interests you about the course?
- Detail any background interest in the area that you are applying for
- Detail any relevant experience explaining the skills you developed through that experience and link back to your choices. Be honest about skills/experiences you have had, do not exaggerate.
- Career aspirations
- Personal achievements
- Positions of responsibility (part time jobs?)
- Show that you have the skills suited to college, self-disciplined, self-motivated, hardworking, committed and sociable.
- Show that you are somebody who will benefit from life at college—remember that you are there to study. Show that you realise that you need a balance between work and social life.
- Show yourself to be an interesting personality. Try to be specific rather than general about your interests and experiences.

Check spelling, grammar, capitals and punctuation.

Advice about using 'I'

Do not write	Instead write
I am captain of the Football Team	Being a captain of the Football Team...
I enjoy playing sport	Having enjoyed playing basketball...
I am studying Highers in...	My Higher subjects are...
I enjoy socialising	Socialising is important to me because...
I have taken part in...	Taking part in...

Creating your Personal Statement

When writing your Personal Statement it is better if you are able to structure it in to sensible paragraphs which contain information about different skills and abilities that you have gained through a variety of experiences. Remember to show that you are a reflective thinker—relate everything you are talking about such as the skills you have gained from an experience back to the course and your career path.

A suggested layout is given below:

Introduction

- Give your reasons for choosing the course you want to do.
- Be enthusiastic about the course
- Career aspiration – brief mention

New Paragraph

- Write about work experience and link to your core skills e.g. working with others, numeracy, punctuality etc.
- Do you have a part-time job? What skills and experience have you gained as part of that.

New Paragraph

- link all to core skills and your chosen course where appropriate
- Write about school experiences S1–6
Wider school experience.
- Extra-curricular activities – sport/music/trips/clubs etc
- Roles within Form class/subject classes etc. ☑ Trash Fashion show, Charity work etc?

New Paragraph

- link all to core skills and your chosen course where appropriate
- Interest out with school – clubs, membership of scouts/BB's
- Relevant experiences outside school – travel, hobbies, sport, voluntary experience.

New Paragraph

- Concluding statement
- How are you preparing for life at college– financial, practical issues living away from home e.g. cooking for yourself, cleaning rooms and clothes etc?
- Identify an area you have mentioned and find a way to build on it for a concluding comment about your course or suitability for college
- Career aspiration – more detail about what you would like to do in the future e.g. go to university/ get a job.

Improving your Personal Statement

The 'before' version – The following student has written a Personal Statement to support an application to read History. It is an early draft which needs improving.

I enjoy History lessons so I have decided to pursue the subject at degree level. At university I look forward to examining a range of historical sources. I am particularly interested in French History, and trips to France have broadened my historical awareness. As a school prefect I hold many responsibilities: organising and attending school functions, delivering speeches to the school body, being an active member of the school council, working effectively with other students. Having played in school concerts with the keyboard orchestra when i was in S3, i have recently taken up piano lessons.

I am a keen sports player and I am a member of the school hockey team, netball team, the athletics squad and the volleyball team, earning me the "Sports Personality of the Year" Award. I have taught information technology skills to younger students and helped a particular student to overcome language difficulties. I have organised sports days and Christmas parties for the elderly; and written, directed and performed a series of short plays.

I have always enjoyed reading but more recently my Higher studies have enabled me to explore foreign literature.

Currently, I am involved in the European Youth Parliament Competition in which I will be representing my school at a residential debating conference. The winner will represent the United Kingdom in Cyprus. This venture enhanced my general knowledge (specifically of genetic engineering and drug legislation).

The 'after' version – The following student has improved their Personal Statement from the earlier draft.

I have always been fascinated by the past, beginning with childhood interests in time-travel and mythology. This interest continued with student exchanges to France and Germany which gave me the opportunity to study 18th century French history and dictatorship and to widen my historical scope. A trip to France, where I studied issues relating to the World Wars, confirmed my interest in History and my decision to pursue the subject at degree level. At University I look forward to analysing varied interpretations of history and the original sources upon which they are based.

As a school prefect I have held many responsibilities such as organising school events, delivering speeches, and participating actively on the school council. This experience has taught me to use my own initiative, and developed my skills of public speaking and diplomacy. Having played in concerts with the keyboard orchestra, I have recently taken up piano lessons and gained a wider awareness of music, especially of Debussy and romanticism.

Playing in various school sports teams has earned me several awards including that of "Sports personality of the Year", and taught me the importance of communication, team working and self-reliance. Organising a series of plays and other events for the elderly was a fulfilling challenge. I also found that the experience of assisting younger pupils with IT and language development was extremely rewarding. I have also enjoyed reading, but more recently my Higher studies have enabled me to explore foreign literature. Brecht is particularly absorbing for his insight into the way people attempt to overcome the horrors of war.

Currently, I am helping to produce a film for the European Student Travel Company concerning the career opportunities for young people in Europe. Also, I represented my school at a national selection conference for the European Youth Parliament. This venture not only enhanced my general knowledge, but improved my teamwork, language and debating skills, which will be particularly useful for my course at university.

Buzzwords and Key Phrases

Below are some 'buzzwords' and 'key phrases' that you can select from to enhance your Personal Statement or even just to help you write it. This list is by no means definitive and you should only use them if appropriate. Remember, use language that you are familiar with, it will sound better.

IN ADDITION – 'in addition to my work experience I have also gained valuable skills throughout my voluntary work.'

AS WELL AS – 'As well as my involvement in team games I am also keen on playing individual competitive sport.'

REINFORCE – 'My involvement in the school voluntary programme has reinforced my decision to study a degree in Nursing.'

STRENGTHEN – 'My decision to study a degree in Economics has been strengthened by my enjoyment and success in my Higher course.'

FURTHERMORE – 'Furthermore, I am particularly suited to a degree in Chemistry because of my love of the subject and my keen interest to further my knowledge of the subject.'

BESIDES – 'Besides my involvement with sport I am also involved in amateur dramatics.'

NOT TO MENTION – 'Being involved in the voluntary work programme not to mention my work experience has provided an opportunity to work with a diverse range of people.'

MORE RECENTLY – 'Although I have taken part in classical music concerts, more recently I have decided to learn to play the piano.'

ENABLE ME – 'The opportunity to play in the school football team enabled me to work as part of a team.'

PROVIDED ME – 'The work experience provided me with an opportunity to work with a range of people.'

OPPORTUNITY TO – 'The opportunity to work with people was provided by my work experience.'

Through my experience.....

I believe that as a result of my participation in.....

Communicator/communication skills

Team player

Time management skills

Effective at managing my time through

Developed my interpersonal skills

Leadership abilities

Positive and enthusiastic person

Use my own initiative

Problem solving abilities

Creative person

Responsible person

Encouraged me to develop....

Mature approach

Called for Interview

As part of the application process you may be called for an interview. This could be either because; you are on the borderline and the college would like to check whether or not your application provides the full picture of your abilities and potential. You may also be called for interview as this is an integral part of the application process. Interviews obviously vary according to subject, and may involve an audition or performance, or a prepared round-table discussion with other applicants, or meeting a panel of lecturers, or anything in between.

The interview is an opportunity for you to show off your skills and abilities to the institution and let them see that you are the best person to be offered a place on that course. A full set of tips on preparing for interviews can be found at <http://www.ucas.com/students/offers/interviews> or via www.myworldofwork.co.uk however, below are some of them to get you started.

1. Check the time and date of the interview. If you foresee any problems with the time or date then contact the College straight away to discuss this with them. If you are happy with the time and date, then contact the college to confirm that you will attend. The letter inviting you to interview will tell you how you can do this either by phone, website, email etc.
2. Read all the information sent to you about the interview. This will give you details on the format of the interview and hints/tips on things to look over in preparation. If they don't you can phone them for more details.
3. Find out where the interview is and plan your journey. Going for interview is stressful enough, plan ahead and find out how to get there, how you will get there and who to ask for when you arrive. Arrive in good time before the interview.
4. Make a list of the important things you want to get across in the interview. Make a list of the skills, qualities and experience you have that make you the best candidate to be offered a place. Be enthusiastic about the course.
5. Speak to your Pastoral Care Teacher or family friend to arrange a mock interview or get help preparing for it. It is better to go in to the interview feeling prepared and having a clearer picture of what to expect.
6. Know your application inside out.
7. Look at the prospectus and department website. This will help convince the people interviewing you, that you are really interested in the course.
8. Know the 'hot topics' in your subject area.
9. Dress to impress. Ensure that you go to the interview smart and respectable. Avoid wearing your school uniform, you want to create the best impression and show that you are ready to make the next step in your life to leave school and attend College.
10. Watch your body language. Don't slouch or yawn, sit up straight and look alert. Give the impression that you are relaxed and prepared for the interview.
11. If you don't understand the question, ask it to be repeated to you.
12. Ensure that you have a good night sleep.

Useful Websites

www.cityofglasgowcollege.co.uk

www.glasgowkelvin.ac.uk

www.stow.ac.uk

www.glasgowclyde.ac.uk

www.clydebank.ac.uk

www.jwheatley.ac.uk

www.south-lanarkshire-college.ac.uk

www.nclanarkshire.ac.uk

www.planitplus.net

www.myworldofwork.co.uk

www.skillsdevelopment.co.uk

Remember – Research is the key – you must look at the different courses available in the different Colleges and check entry requirements for each.

