Welcome

In this handbook you’ll find all the activities and resources you need to support your mentees to make the best decisions for their future.

Contact us

You can contact the Access Department anytime at access@teachfirst.org.uk

@TeachFirst #TFFutures
facebook.com/teachfirst
facebook.com/groups/futuresmentors

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Dear Mentor,

We are delighted to welcome you to the Futures community. Mentoring is a powerful way to support pupils as they start to make important decisions about their future. Over the next 14 months, you will be a vital role model of success, inspiring your mentees to work hard and providing access to advice, information and opportunities.

Your role is to help your mentees gain the knowledge they need to successfully select and apply for university, as well as develop the competencies they need to succeed in Year 13, and to thrive once at university. This guide provides you with outlines for seven mentoring meetings that reflect the journey your mentees will be going through on their way to university, as well as a range of activities to help them develop key skills. You will also find hints and tips for supporting pupils who are not working to the standard university application timeline.

We encourage you to share your experiences and any additional materials or ideas on the in the Futures mentor Facebook group, facebook.com/groups/futuresmentors. You will also be supported in your role as a mentor by the Access Officer in your area of the country - see page 6 for their contact details. It’s great to have you on board and we look forward to working with you over the coming year.

The Futures Team
Futures is a two year programme designed to support sixth-form pupils in making informed and ambitious choices about their futures. It provides pupils with a programme of activities, including an aspiration-raising launch event, university day trips, a four-day residential Easter School at Oxford or Cambridge, careers insight sessions, and a mentor during the second year of the programme.

The programme is broken down into four phases. You’ll support your mentees through the final two of these phases over the next 14 months by providing them with specific advice and guidance while they make choices about university and their future. The combination of Futures activities and mentoring supports pupils to make a well-informed, high-quality application to university and prepare them for the transition to undergraduate life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Core Futures Programme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December – February Year 12</td>
<td><strong>Who am I?</strong> During this phase pupils devote time to getting a clear understanding of their passions, skills, interests and needs. <strong>November / December</strong> – Launch events to welcome pupils onto Futures. <strong>February</strong> – Pupils attend one or two university day trips. At these events they do things like take part in taster lectures and meet with undergraduate students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March – July Year 12</td>
<td><strong>Where am I going?</strong> During this phase pupils make decisions about the courses and universities they want to apply to. <strong>March / April</strong> – Easter School. This is a four day residential in Oxford or Cambridge. <strong>July</strong> – Meet their mentor – that’s you!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August Year 12 – November Year 13</td>
<td><strong>How do I get there?</strong> During this phase pupils devote time to making a well-planned, high-quality UCAS application. <strong>July / August</strong> – There are a range of summer enrichment activities and opportunities for pupils to get involved in. <strong>In August</strong> they need to fill in an electronic progress update. <strong>September / October</strong> – Pupils should attend sessions to help them make the best application to Russell Group universities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December – August Year 13</td>
<td><strong>Preparing for the future</strong> During this phase pupils secure the university of their choice and prepare for life beyond Year 13. <strong>In January, May and August</strong> pupils need to fill in electronic progress updates. <strong>September</strong> – Futures Graduation.</td>
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</table>
Across the programme pupils will also be developing the six Futures competencies: initiative and independence; aspiration and ambition; communication; curiosity; research, planning and organisation; and reflection.

The four phases of the Futures programme, including the events pupils participate in, are set out here, as well as an overview of our recommended milestones and the key dates associated with making an application to study at university.

The guidance and activities you’ll find in this handbook link to each of these phases, as well as to the Futures competencies, and if you dedicate time to each of them with your mentees they will be ready to make the right decisions about their futures.

There’s also information in the table about additional support we can provide through our Oxbridge Support programme if either or both of your mentees are thinking of applying to the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge.

### Oxbridge Support Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key dates and milestones</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>April / May</strong> – Oxbridge support programme starts.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>June</strong> – Oxford Trip. On this trip pupils experience a mock tutorial, meet undergraduates and speak to admissions tutors.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>July – September</strong> – Pupils will receive a regular Action Pack with information and guidance.</td>
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<td><strong>September</strong> – Admissions tests support.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>October / November</strong> – Interview workshops and mock interview support delivered by Oxford and Cambridge specialists.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>August</strong> – Pupils should complete a first draft of their personal statement.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>September</strong> – Pupils should make a firm decision on the course they will apply for and the five universities they will apply to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15 October</strong> – Closing date for applications to Oxford and Cambridge, and medicine, dentistry and veterinary science courses.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>15 January</strong> – Closing date for the majority of university applications (unless your mentees’ courses had an early application deadline).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>31 March</strong> – Most universities will have sent pupils their offers.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2 May</strong> – Deadline to choose their firm and insurance choices.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>End of May</strong> – Deadline for pupils to apply for a student loan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Early August</strong> – Many universities will close their accommodation applications at this time.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>16 August</strong> - results day.</td>
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Access Officers

**North East**
Dawn Prior
020 3862 8954

**Yorkshire and The Humber**
Ailsa Brown
020 3862 8451

**North West**
Claire Critchley
020 3862 8871

**The Midlands**
Andreas Michael
020 3862 8510

**London (North & East)**
Shona Fawcett
020 3862 8111

**London (South & West)**
Katherine Balcoumbe
020 3862 8016

**South West**
Sarah Spencer
020 3862 8668
Futures mentees

Futures pupils have been selected based on a range of factors, including:

- If they have been eligible for free school meals during their secondary education.
- If they are the first in their family to access higher education.
- If they live in areas where numbers of pupils progressing to Russell Group universities is lower than average.

We also take into account additional challenges they may be facing, including if they are a young carer. Most Futures pupils will have gained at least six Bs at GCSE, and you should expect that they are academically able and have the potential to succeed with the right support.

Pupils considering university tend to fall into four categories; academics, next steppers, option openers or toe dippers. Understanding which your mentee identifies with can uncover more about their reasons for wanting to attend university and how you guide them to think about their university and course choices.

**Academics** focus on learning and gaining academic skills. Likely to go on to do a postgraduate degree. Main reasons for wanting to go to university are “to stretch me intellectually” or “to learn critically”.

**Next Steppers** have a clear career goal and choose a degree with that in mind. They typically chose their course “as it is required for my intended career”.

**Option Openers** do not necessarily have a clear goal, although they may have a vague idea of an industry that interests them. Option openers tend to select a course they believe they will enjoy and are more likely to be good at. This group typically want to attend university to “learn about interesting subjects”.

**Toe Dippers** are primarily attracted to university for the lifestyle/living experience but, similar to Option openers, hope to have more opportunities presented to them afterwards by having obtained a degree. This group, when asked about reasons for university selection, answer either “to have a good social life”, “to participate in sport/societies”, or “all my friends are going”.

Of course, it may be that your pupil has or will reach the decision that they are not going to apply to university. This could be because they are committed to another pathway (for example an apprenticeship), because they are going to take a gap year, or because they are resitting Year 12. There is still plenty you can do to support pupils in this position, not least by working with them on the competency development activities included on pages 37 to 39 of this handbook.
Mentoring is the backbone of Futures, which is why your role as a mentor is so important. You bring a wealth of experience from your own career development that will be invaluable to your mentees, many of whom will not have access to this knowledge through their families.

Futures mentoring is not centred on academic support, and you will find you have been matched with your mentees due to local geography rather than subject expertise. Rather, your role is to support your mentees through the selection of, application to, and preparation for transitioning to the right university for them. Your relationship with your mentees begins as they near the end of Year 12. In the coming months they will be making important decisions about where to apply and what to study. During this time, they will need to build their applications, personal statements, and interview technique. Beyond a successful university application they will need to develop the competencies and knowledge to thrive once they begin undergraduate life.

Experience has shown us that the more regularly you have contact with your mentee, the more powerful the mentoring connection will be. We have provided seven session guidelines in this handbook, but there is plenty of scope for flexibility to hold more meetings should you wish. You will get to know what works best for your mentees and we want you to have the confidence to tailor your meetings to their needs. Whilst each mentoring relationship will be different there are some milestones of progress that we expect all young people to meet on their path to making informed decisions about the future.

**Who’s who?**

You will be one of a number of sources of support to your mentee as they navigate Year 13 and the university application process; others include their teachers, friends and families, and their Access Officer. Keeping abreast of the extent and nature of the guidance they are receiving from these other parties will enable you to work out what is missing, and help your mentee fill any gaps. Your mentee’s school will have an appointed Futures Lead to act as a point of contact (you will be introduced via email at the start of your mentoring relationship) – do keep them informed of your mentee’s progress, and contact them if you have any queries regarding in-school support.

**Other elements of your role**

- You will receive regular newsletters from the Futures Team providing you with information and support to make the most of your meetings.
- Think creatively about using your networks to add value to your mentees’ experiences but also encourage them to take the lead and do their own research too.
- Make the most of the Futures mentor network by joining the [Facebook group](#) - here you can share top tips with other mentors as well as source subject or careers expertise relevant to your mentee.
What is the impact of mentoring?

There are three main barriers to Futures pupils accessing higher education. They have told us the ways in which mentors support them in overcoming these barriers:

1) **Knowledge** - Mentors support them with the personal statements for their university applications, and give them information about different universities and careers. They challenge their assumptions, and get them to think more widely about their options, as well as helping them feel more certain of their final choices.

2) **Aspiration** - Mentors help mentees believe that they can get to university, and that they will ‘fit in’ once there.

3) **Attainment** - Mentors help mentees identify ways to build exam techniques or subject knowledge, and encourage them to focus on their exams.

“I feel very lucky to have a mentor like mine – she has played a very important role in my further education career and is a friend, advisor, supporter, and number one fan of mine. She’ll see me become successful and know that she has contributed to that!”
Mentor case study

Sarah-Louise Dalgleish is a Teach First ambassador who was a mentor from 2014-16.

We spoke to her about her experience...

Why did you want to sign up to be a Futures mentor?
I was frustrated by the fact that so many pupils from low income backgrounds with great talent and potential missed out on opportunities available to their peers, simply because they didn’t have the same level of support or resources available to help them succeed in making important choices about life beyond school. Going to university opened so many doors for me personally, and I wanted that to be the case for my mentees too.

What did you do in your role as a Futures mentor?
My role has been to support and challenge my mentees to make decisions about their future. I worked with them over a series of sessions to identify their goals and take steps towards them – whether it’s related to developing study techniques, navigating the UCAS process, managing exam stress, or making decisions about where to work or study.

Every time we met, we worked together on an action plan, based on the milestones in the mentor handbook, and tried to break down bigger goals into smaller, more manageable ones. Where it was appropriate, I shared personal experiences and provided advice but the main aim of our sessions was to work through any challenges they might be facing and to help them to find solutions for themselves!

How else have you been able to support your mentees?
I checked in with them between meetings to offer informal support and communicated mainly by phone after we had been working together a while, but initially we arranged meetings by email or through their school. We have also used Skype calls when we can’t meet up face-to-face.

Futures assign a school-based Lead Teacher who can support Futures mentors with keeping up to date on forthcoming events, exams or mentees progress at school, which has been incredibly helpful in joining up the support the school and the Futures Team provide.

What was your most memorable moment?
It has to be receiving a phone call from one of my mentees to say that she had secured an offer from the University of Oxford! It was a really proud moment, as I know that my mentee had worked so hard to overcome her fear of applying to university in the first place, and that the experience of going to Oxford is going to open up so many exciting opportunities for her in the future.

Sara, one of Sarah’s mentees says:

“"My mentor has been great in assisting me with my personal statement, keeping organised and just generally keeping me motivated to aim high. She was very good at helping me make a plan and use that as motivation to work hard.”
Arranging meetings with mentees

In accordance with Teach First’s Safeguarding policy you will use your professional email address to interact with your mentees. We ask that you copy in futuresmentoring@teachfirst.org.uk to all your interactions as an additional safeguarding measure, and as an alternative mechanism for us to track mentee engagement if necessary. As you won’t have your mentee’s phone number, it is worth arranging to hold meetings in mutually convenient places that are easy to find e.g. your mentee’s school or your place of work. Remember that meetings, including those held via Skype, must be conducted in an open public place.

We very much hope that your mentee will be consistently engaged and respond promptly to your messages. However, when working with young people we know that sometimes there may be occasions where your mentee is difficult to reach and setting up meetings requires some perseverance. If you are having issues getting in contact with your mentee, it is important that you reach out to the right people to get the required support to resolve any engagement issues promptly. Should you experience any issues regarding engagement of your mentee, please follow the process outlined below.

**Step 1: Contact the Futures Lead in your mentee’s school**
One of the responsibilities of the Futures Lead in school is to be the first point of contact if any issues arise. They can directly help chase up pupils, check emails, clarify information, and they should be your first port of call. You should have already been introduced to them via email. Email is checked less frequently in schools so please give a teacher up to three days to respond to your query, and do send a follow up prompt if necessary.

**Step 2: Email your local Access Officer**
Access Officers are your second point of call if the issue hasn’t been resolved or acknowledged within three days. You can find your local Access Officer on page 6.

**Step 3: Contact the Teach First Futures Team**
If your problem has not been resolved or cannot be resolved by your local Access Officer within a week, then the issue should be escalated to the Access Department who oversee the Futures programme. They can be contacted via access@teachfirst.org.uk.

Please note that we hope that this escalation process will rarely be required, and our experience with the Futures programme is that both pupils and school staff are typically engaged and excited about working with our mentors.

N.B. If you wish to raise a safeguarding concern about your mentee, please follow the process on pages 7 and 8 of the Teach First Safeguarding Policy.

Please make sure if you are volunteering on behalf of a Teach First supporter organisation you check any specific guidelines they would like you to follow such as location of meetings, communication platforms to use etc.
What might prevent a pupil from accessing higher education? The following is a list of things that can commonly feel like a barrier or limitation for pupils in their journey to accessing higher education. Explore some of the descriptions below to see if there is anything your mentee identifies with.

**Struggling to make the grades they are capable of**
A level/6th Form study can be a big leap from GCSE. Pupils can struggle with their academic work and may not feel they are achieving the grades they are capable of. This can limit the type of course or university students can apply to.

**Lack of information, advice and guidance**
Many young people feel they do not receive the advice and information they need to make sense of the increasing range of qualifications and options open to them, which makes the university application process difficult to navigate.

**Financial issues**
Undertaking a degree is a significant financial commitment which may deter some pupils from applying or encourage them to apply to local universities to limit their expenditure, even if this isn’t their first choice. Pupils are worried about debt, and feel they lack awareness of the financial support available. Some pupils can also feel that they’d like to leave education to start earning.

**Concerns around the transition to university**
Some pupils feel their prior education experience doesn’t set them up to study at university or for the social transition – they feel unprepared for the amount of free time they would have and how to manage this productively.

**Feeling that university ‘isn’t for me’**
Studies indicate that many pupils feel that some institutions, particularly the more elite ones, aren’t for them and instead choose universities where they feel they will ‘fit in’. The notion of going to university can feel like an alien world to some pupils whose families may not have attended, and this affects their willingness to apply.
Barriers and influencers

Fulfilling ambitions
Some pupils find it difficult to turn their ambitions for university into reality, which can prevent them from making a suitably ambitious university application.

The influence of parents
Parents can play a key role for many pupils – influencing whether they will apply, where to study and what courses to follow. Studies have found a clear alignment between what parents say they want for their children and what young people aspire to themselves.

The influence of peers
Peers can exert a certain amount of influence over the decision to remain in education, with pupils more likely to stay in education if their schoolmates also stay on. Peers can also influence the subject to study – with some research indicating that some pupils were reluctant to study subjects which were not seen as ‘cool’.

Support to cope with setbacks
It is important pupils have the skills and support structures to cope with setbacks and difficulties in the process of applying to university. Pupils can experience ‘limiting messaging’ (e.g. being told they aren’t good enough) which may deter them from making ambitious choices or make it difficult to bounce back from set-backs such as sitting a difficult exam.

Negative school experience and perception of education
The ethos of the school that a student currently attends can influence progression to university and attitudes towards education in general. Unsurprisingly, many pupils who dislike school or 6th Form tend to want to leave as soon as possible.
**Mentor meeting guide**

In the following pages we have provided guidance for eight core mentor meetings, each with a diary date to indicate when they should take place. The meetings have been divided according to the **final two phases** of the Futures journey, and each has a core outcome.

In addition, we have set out a series of milestones which we believe each pupil should have met by the end of that diary date, aligning with the UCAS deadlines outlined on pages 28 and 29. Meeting all of the milestones over the course of the two phases should ensure your mentee is on track to succeed.

While we do not expect you to stick to the exact plan of each of the seven mentor sessions, we do ask that you give some time to each of the phases and milestones so that the broad outcomes are achieved. We believe following this process is the basis for a well-informed journey to accessing higher education. As you build a relationship with your mentee, you will get a picture of what works best for them, how much time you will need to spend on each phase and milestone, the pace of your meetings and how much contact is needed between meetings. Each mentoring relationship is very different and there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach.

Once your mentee has completed their UCAS application and has finalised their firm and insurance choices, you may wish to deviate further from the meeting guidance, and instead focus on establishing areas of development on a more individual basis with your mentee. This could mean evaluating the Futures competencies they would most like to work on, or identifying more practical skills around budgeting or independent living that they will need once they get to university. We have included a range of activities and resources to support with these kinds of meetings in the later pages of the handbook. We have also included some guidance on supporting mentees who aren’t working to the standard UCAS timeline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>December – February</th>
<th>March – July</th>
<th>August Year 12 – November Year 13</th>
<th>December – August</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who am I?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Where am I going?</strong></td>
<td><strong>How do I get there?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Preparing for the future</strong></td>
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**MENTORING**  
From July of Year 12 until August of Year 13
MEETING 1: WORKING ON THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

Outcomes: Your mentee has critically reflected on where they are and are clear about their next steps, feeling positive about what they can achieve in the coming year. They understand the importance of a strong application, particularly the personal statement section.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key calendar events</th>
<th>Mentee milestones</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentees will have received their end of Year 12 exam results.</td>
<td>Your mentee understands the benefits of attending a Russell Group university and, after reflecting on their end of Year 12 results, is giving due consideration to applying to a Russell Group university if this fits their grade profile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentees will be at varying stages early in their UCAS application journey, and may have begun drafting their personal statement.</td>
<td>Your mentee has received feedback from you on their personal statement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The final deadline for applications to Oxford or Cambridge, or for medicine, dentistry or veterinary science is 15 October.</td>
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This meeting is an opportunity for your mentee to reflect on their end of Year 12 exam results, and check that the plans made up until this point are still appropriately ambitious as well as realistic. **N.B. Most pupils will be sitting two-year A level courses assessed at the end of Year 13. Any AS levels they sat at the end of Year 12 do not have an effect on Year 13 results (though they are a good indicator of current performance). Therefore, though in previous years poor results at the end of Year 12 might represent a significant barrier to university access, there is now much more flexibility for pupils to improve performance before their final A level assessments.**

This meeting is also a chance to find out where your mentee is up to in the UCAS process, and discuss their next steps. Depending on where/what your mentee is applying for, they may need to focus much more effort at this point into their applications and should be aware of the additional support Teach First provides for Oxbridge applicants.

You might like to:
- Talk to your mentee about their exam results using the guide on page 26.
- Go over the application process and some application terms with your mentee – what specific dates or deadlines might apply to them? Encourage them to find out their school’s internal UCAS deadlines if they don’t already know them, and let you know so you can work with them.
- Direct your mentee to the resources designed to help them draft their personal statement (see appendix on page 30). If they already have a draft, ask them to send it to you so you can offer some feedback.
- Encourage pupils to go on further university open days or subject specific insight sessions. Direct them to the tools on page 32 and page 34 to support them in deciding which universities and courses to consider.
### MEETING 2: PREPARING TO SUBMIT THE UCAS APPLICATION

**Outcome:** Your mentee feels confident that they are in a position to submit a strong application and understands any additional steps that they need to take in making their application, such as admissions tests or interviews.

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<tr>
<th>Key calendar events</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mentees will have chosen the universities and courses they want to apply to, and will be working with their schools on completing their UCAS applications.* Ideally, pupils will submit their UCAS applications by the end of November. Schools will certainly be aiming to have all applications submitted before pupils break up for Christmas. The final deadline for non-Oxbridge/specialist applications is 15 January.</td>
<td>Your mentee has made a sound decision about which universities/courses they are applying to. Your mentee has submitted, or will submit very shortly, their UCAS application.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This meeting focuses on supporting pupils to complete their application to university through UCAS. This meeting is a chance to check final decisions on university and course decisions, work on further revisions to personal statements, and explore admissions tests they may need to take. If your mentee is not close to submitting their application, this meeting is a chance to focus on and attempt to resolve any roadblocks that are stopping them moving forward.

**You might like to:**

- Discuss the five universities your mentee has chosen to apply to, checking with them that one or two of their choices are ‘stretch’ (grades required are slightly higher than what they are on track for), one or two are ‘match’ (grades required match what they are predicted to achieve) and one is an ‘insurance’ choice (grades required are slightly lower than what they are on track for).
- Review your mentee’s final draft of their personal statement together. Evaluate whether they have followed the tips on page 30. Go over the application process and some application terms with your mentee – what specific dates or deadlines might apply to them? Encourage them to find out their school’s internal UCAS deadlines if they don’t already know them, and let you know so you can work with them.
- If your mentee is struggling to complete their UCAS application, explore why this is. Devise an action plan with some key dates for your mentee to follow to ensure they overcome these challenges and submit an application they are happy with.
- Begin to discuss any questions or concerns they may have about studying at university and living away from home.

*Pupils applying for Oxford or Cambridge or for medicine, dentistry and veterinary science will have already submitted their applications. For suggestions for how you might support those pupils, see pages 29 and 36.*
Phase 4: Preparing for the future
Securing offers and preparing for the future

MEETING 3: PREPARING FOR RECEIVING OFFERS AND INTERVIEWS

Outcome: Your mentee understands how to make their firm and insurance choices, and feels ready for the year ahead.

Key calendar events
All UCAS applications will have been submitted, and offers will start coming in from universities that pupils have applied to. If their application is submitted by the 15 January deadline, they should hear back by 31 March.

Mentee milestones
Your mentee understands how to make sound firm and insurance choices based on their expected grades (not unreasonably optimistic or too safe).

Your mentee has experienced a practice interview with you/an interviewer you have secured.

With university applications submitted and mentees thinking about the year ahead, this is a good opportunity to check in with your mentee. Use this meeting to discuss how they are feeling about what they have to do in the coming months, including potentially attending university interviews, making their firm and insurance choices, and sitting their end of year exams.

You might like to:
• Ask your mentee to make a pledge about what they want to achieve by the end of Year 13.
• Discuss any concerns they have about their applications, helping them to focus on the areas where they can take action to resolve those concerns, or help them manage concerns that are out of their control.
• Use the firm and insurance choices tool on page 34 to guide pupils’ thinking as they make their decisions.
• Introduce your mentee to interview techniques, and suggest the sorts of questions that may come up, based on their personal statement. If you are helping your mentee to prepare for a university admissions interview, check with the university on the style of interview. Some universities may ask competency-based questions, and others may ask academic-based problems. Arrange to have a practice interview at or alongside your next meeting. This could be with you, or another interviewer you source. Please note, if you invite an objective interviewer to the mentor meeting, you must remain present for the session for safeguarding purposes.

Finally...
Your mentee should start looking at opportunities for enrichment or work experience over the summer around now. Use the appendix on page 44 for some examples.
### MEETING 4: SUMMER ENRICHMENT PLANS

**Outcome:** *Your mentee has reflected on what university may be like, and how they would overcome its challenges. They have also developed a plan for how they will develop careers insights over the summer.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key calendar events</th>
<th>Mentee milestones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offers from universities will still be coming in, and mentees will be starting to make their firm and insurance choices.</td>
<td>Your mentee is beginning to feel prepared for university life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentees will be beginning to think about preparing for their end of year exams and are likely to have mock exams around this time.</td>
<td>Your mentee starts to put together a plan for how they will engage with enrichment opportunities during the summer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This meeting is an opportunity to start thinking about what university life is like in more depth and plan opportunities to take part in over summer. You might also like to use this meeting to talk more about life beyond university, and your mentee’s future career ambitions.

**You might like to:**

- Reflect on your experiences of making a big transition. This may be going to university, moving away from home or moving jobs. You may want to share your experiences and what you learnt from them with your mentee.
- Ask your mentee to think of three individual challenges they may face at university (e.g. preparing for independent study, living away from home etc.) and how they might plan to overcome them.
- Look at some of the careers resources and activities on page 44 so that your mentee is focusing on the coming year, but also on their longer-term plans.
- Work with your mentee to put in applications for summer enrichment schemes they are interested in (see pages 42 and 43 for examples). Additionally, make plans to take your mentee to visit one or two different employers you know of, or encourage them to make visits independently, so they can get an insight into life in the workplace.
Preparing for the future
Securing offers and preparing for the future

MEETING 5: MAKING FIRM AND INSURANCE CHOICES AND PREPARING FOR EXAMS

**Diary date 2018:**
Late April

**Outcome:** Your mentee feels confident about their final exams, motivated to achieve their potential, and understands how to apply for their student loan.

### Key calendar events

- Mentees will be studying for their exams.
- The deadline for making firm and insurance choices through UCAS is 2 May.
- The deadline for applying for a student loan is at the end of May.
- If your mentee is struggling with a particular subject, consider who you know who might be able to offer support.
- If you would like to contact other mentors to do a tutoring swap or for more information about how best to support your mentee with a particular subject make use of the mentor Facebook group to leverage the mentor network.

### Mentee milestones

- Your mentee feels motivated to work hard and achieve their grades.
- Your mentee is confident in making their firm and insurance choices.
- Your mentee understands how to apply for their student loan.

As the last meeting before the exams, the purpose of this session is to ensure mentees are prepared and motivated for them. This is a good opportunity to revisit aspirations for the future and frame this as motivation to work hard for the next two months. Use your mentee’s longer-term goals to ground where they are now and ensure they don’t lose perspective in the build-up to their exams.

**You might like to:**

- Revisit some of the discussions you have had about hopes for the future in your previous meetings – remind pupils of their hopes and longer-term ambitions.
- Revisit your mentee’s firm and insurance choices – encourage them to talk about their excitement for their post 18 journey. If they are still unsure about making their choices, refer them to the tool on page 34.
- Encourage your mentee to share any concerns and work together to set actions/targets to address these.
- Ask your mentee to describe how they are managing their revision. Are there any subjects or modules that are of particular concern, and that they should be dedicating more time to? Are they taking up opportunities for further support from their teachers? Equally, are they ensuring they take regular breaks, and maintain their time to relax and unwind?
- Discuss how your mentee applies for their student loan; see the appendix on page 35 for more details.

**Finally...**

Be aware that pupils can be hard to get hold of around exam time and you should consider booking in meetings well ahead of time or communicate via email if they are unable to meet up with you.
Preventing for the future
Securing offers and preparing for the future

MEETING 6: POST EXAM CHECK IN AND PREPARING FOR RESULTS DAY

Outcome: Your mentee reflects on their experience of taking their exams and is enthused about the summer opportunities they will be taking part in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key calendar events</th>
<th>Mentee milestones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| University accommodation application deadlines are usually in early August.  
Mentees will be preparing to receive their exam results on 16 August.  
Details of the Futures Graduation event will be sent to mentees – please encourage them to sign up. | Your mentee has finalised their plans for enrichment over the summer. |

This is the last meeting before results day. Use this meeting to discuss how they feel their exams went and what they plan to do between now and results day and on the day itself.

You might like to:

• Reflect on your own experiences of waiting for results, either exam results or the results of an interview.
• Help your mentee to manage the waiting process and prepare themselves for results, which they are likely to be nervous about.
• Discuss the experiences your mentee will have over the summer and what skills any plans they have coming up will give them. Explore how these skills will prepare them for study at university and in future employment. How can they build on what they did last summer and develop themselves even further?
• If your mentee is planning to study away from home, find out if they have started to research accommodation yet. Useful websites include:
  • Which? University - what to study, where to go and how to get there
  • The Complete University Guide - choosing the right accommodation for you
Preparing for the future
Securing offers and preparing for the future

MEETING 7: LIFE AFTER SCHOOL

Outcome: Your mentee is clear about their next steps and have reflected on their experiences over the last two years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key calendar events</th>
<th>Mentee milestones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentees will have received their results and accepted a place at university.</td>
<td>Your mentee accepts an offer and feels prepared to attend university, and is specifically prepared for the first few weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Futures Team will be sending out a progress update to pupils to find out what they are doing next year and how they feel Futures has had an impact on them. A survey will also be sent to mentors to capture your experiences.</td>
<td>Your mentee has considered at least two societies they might like to get involved in at their university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the graduation event in September sessions will be run to prepare mentees for university life and put those attending the same universities in touch with each other.</td>
<td>Your mentee has reflected on and appreciates how they have developed over the programme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This meeting should take place as soon as possible after results day – this is an opportunity to reflect on results and discuss what happens next. Depending on your mentee’s exam results, this meeting may be based around a celebration or require you to support them in making a revised plan for their next steps. We advise that you get in touch with your mentee before this meeting so that you can plan its content.

You might like to:

• Discuss results and next steps. Refer to pages 23 and 26 for tools and tips on supporting your mentee, especially if their results were not as expected.

• Share what you have learned personally over the past year and ask your mentee to do the same. What will they do differently as a result of being on Futures? How do they think they could continue to be involved with and support Futures once they finish the programme? Discuss any information they might have from their universities – such as information on accommodation or freshers’ week.

• Discuss any information they might have from their universities – such as information on accommodation or freshers’ week.

• Reflect on your own first weeks at university or in a new job – reassure them that it’s normal to find this transition difficult.

• Discuss the opportunities that will be available to them at university – sports, societies, volunteering and careers fairs/guidance services.
Questioning

The ability to question effectively is one of the most important skills that you can develop as a mentor. Good questions can help identify key issues, help your mentee to think more clearly about their goals and will help your mentoring sessions and mentor relationship to progress.

Ask open questions (who, what, when, where, why, how) to encourage deep, independent thinking. E.g. ‘How do you feel about that?’ ‘What might you do to take this forward?’

Try to limit your use of closed questions as they can be leading, preventing any deeper exploration of issues. E.g. ‘Do you know what course you want to do?’

Some statements can open up dialogue. E.g. ‘Tell me more about…’

You can also use statements that clarify. E.g. ‘I think what you are saying is…’

Consider the questions you could ask your mentee for each meeting and questions that you could leave them with to develop their thinking for future meetings.

You can use different types of questions to help structure your mentoring session. Some examples are given in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening phase</th>
<th>Questions to use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging</td>
<td>What has been going well? What would it be useful for us to cover today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying</td>
<td>When you say... what exactly do you mean? Can you give me an example of ...? Tell me more about....? What do you really want?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting</td>
<td>It sounds to me like you are really..... is that right? Do you think it is a good idea to.......? Do you believe that if...................? How will you look back on this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarising</td>
<td>We’ve covered lots of ground today – what specifically will you take away? What do you think the main themes of today’s session have been?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coaching models

Some of your meetings with your mentee may feel less like traditional mentoring, with you giving concrete advice and guidance, and some more like coaching, with you supporting your mentee to work through a problem and come to a solution or a range of solutions independently. This style may be particularly useful for those mentees who are not moving through the UCAS timeline, to support them in exploring alternative pathways.

Below are two models you can use to structure these coaching conversations.

The GROW model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>G is for Goal</strong></th>
<th>Example questions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify a target, define it and the motivation to achieve it</td>
<td>“What do you want to achieve?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“How will you know that you have achieved your goal?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>R is for Reality</strong></th>
<th>Example questions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explore the current situation and its relation to the Goal, what resources and skills they have available and identify self-limiting beliefs</td>
<td>“What have you done so far to achieve this goal?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What is happening now?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What.../who.../when.../how often...?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What is the effect or result of that?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What challenges have you met?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>O is for Options</strong></th>
<th>Example questions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideas that could get them to their target and overcome any barriers</td>
<td>“What else could you do?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What if this or that barrier were removed?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What are the benefits and downsides of each option?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“What factors will you use to weigh up options?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>W is for Will</strong></th>
<th>Example questions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select the most effective ideas and commit to them</td>
<td>“It sounds to me like you are really... is that right?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Do you think it is a good idea to...?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Do you believe that if...?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“How will you look back on this?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Throughout the discussion, listen carefully to what your mentees say, avoiding interruptions. If you need more information or clarification, use open questions such as “When you say...what exactly do you mean?” and “Tell me more about...”

Try to avoid passing judgement on what your mentees are thinking about their pathways. Frame any concerns as questions rather than statements: “Have you considered...?”, “Do you believe that if...?”, “Do you think it is a good idea to consider...?”

Before moving onto the next part of the discussion, summarise what they have said to check you understand: “So I think what you’re saying is...”

End the discussion with some clear and ambitious action points for your mentee moving forward. Whatever their next steps, finish the meeting by clarifying these, writing them down, and setting a date to check their progress.
The CIGAR model
This is very similar to the GROW model, however the start of the conversation is broader. The key questions at the beginning are designed to help your mentee reflect on where they are at with a range of different topics before narrowing down to focus on one specific area they would like to work on. This model may therefore suit mentees who initially find it challenging to identify the specific skills or knowledge they want to develop.
This model is also different in that it ends with a review phase, allowing you and your mentee to establish a time frame to achieve the goal they have set and agree on a way of measuring success.

| C is for CURRENT SITUATION | How are things going?  
|                           | What are you finding easy at the moment?  
|                           | What are some of the things you are finding difficult?  
|                           | What is the current situation? Where are you at with things right now?  
|                           | What skills do you feel you are good at? What skills might you need to develop when you go to university?  
|                           | What areas of knowledge about the transition to university would you like to learn more about?  
|                           | Of all of the topics we have spoken about, which one would you like to focus on together now?  

| I is for IDEAL | Now that we have identified which topic you want to focus on, what is it that you specifically want to achieve?  
|               | What goal can you set yourself?  
|               | Where do you see yourself at with this at the end of our mentoring relationship?  
|               | Where do you ultimately want to get to with this?  
|               | What is your vision for this?  
|               | What do you want to achieve by the end of this session?  

| G is for GAPS | What more do we need to know to help you reach your goal?  
|              | What are the gaps in your knowledge of this topic?  
|              | What challenges have you come up against so far?  
|              | What challenges might you face when trying to achieve your goal?  
|              | How can we get around this?  

| A is for ACTION | How can we work on this together?  
|               | What actions will we take to help you achieve your goal?  
|               | What will we agree to do following this meeting?  
|               | What will we agree to do during our next meeting?  

| R is for REVIEW | How and when will we revisit this to check on your progress?  
|               | What is a realistic time frame to for you to achieve your goal?  
|               | What does success look like? How will we measure your success?  
|               | How will we know that you have achieved your goal?  

CIGAR Coaching Model adapted from trainingzone online resource.
Post-exam conversations

Use the steps below to have a discussion with your mentee about their end of Year 12 results.

1. Ask pupils to talk through their grades.
2. Break down their grades by modules to get a sense of the different factors making up the grade.
3. Pull out modules they have achieved high grades in – get them to identify their skills/knowledge/learning or revision behaviours linked to those modules.
4. Are there learning behaviours that proved successful that pupils can translate into other subjects/modules?
5. Where are the areas for development?
6. Were some grades lower than expected? What do they think went wrong?
7. Identify three next steps for each subject from the list below:
   - Speak to subject teacher.
   - Speak to a friend who did well in a particular module and get their advice.
   - Request copies of the paper.
   - Review the mark scheme to understand in detail what happened.
   - Draft an essay plan of the essay you wish you had written.
   - Put time aside each week to focus on additional reading/revision for a subject.
8. Pupils may need to make decisions about resits and/or repeating the year – again, talk them through all pros and cons and ensure they are speaking to individual subject teachers as well as their head of year to get a view on this.
9. If resits are necessary encourage them to map out their time to show when they will factor in time for resit revision alongside learning new content.
10. If repeating the year is necessary remind them this is just one year to have a really positive impact on their future – this is a tough and brave decision.

Dealing with vague responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of response</th>
<th>Mentee example</th>
<th>Mentor response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universal statement</td>
<td>Everyone did badly in that module.</td>
<td>Everyone? Can you think of anyone that did better?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vague noun</td>
<td>They think I’m a failure. I want to go to the best university.</td>
<td>Who specifically? Which is the best university for you and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vague verb</td>
<td>I did well in my exams.</td>
<td>Exactly how well? What were your strengths?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>School always submits the UCAS forms late. I can’t study after school.</td>
<td>Always? How could you make them do it differently? How specifically prevents you from doing this? How can you overcome the barriers to doing so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much/ little/hard etc.</td>
<td>That is going to be far too much work.</td>
<td>Compared to what? Why is it worth putting in the work now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negativity</td>
<td>The whole situation with my results is a disaster.</td>
<td>What do you think would make the situation better?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding the UCAS application system

UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) is an organisation responsible for managing applications to higher education institutions in the UK. All applicants wishing to study an undergraduate degree in the UK must apply through UCAS.

Normally supported by their school, pupils register an account with UCAS via their website, and electronically fill out information about themselves. This includes information on their university choices and their personal statement which they submit via the UCAS website. There is quite a lot to fill out but they don’t need to do it all at once – they can save their progress and log back in anytime. UCAS then sends pupils’ information to each of their selected universities who respond back to them, via the UCAS website. The responses universities will give pupils are set out in the ‘application terms’ section below, but broadly speaking they will either decide to accept their application and make them an offer or decline their application. There is an application fee of £24 to pay to UCAS which pupils must pay to submit their application.

For more information about UCAS visit this hyperlink.

University choices

Initially, pupils apply to study at up to five universities. Later on, they refine this to two options, a firm and an insurance choice. You can find more information about firm and insurance choices further on in the section.

Entry requirements

Some universities have a grade requirement which pupils must meet e.g. entry requirement for History at University of Bristol is AAA.

Other universities list tariff points instead, otherwise known as UCAS points. Grades are converted to points for the offer, e.g. an A grade at A level is worth 120 points. Pupils need to understand what grades they would need to secure to make up the required tariff points.

Course choices

As well as applying to a university, pupils apply to study a course at that university. Broadly speaking, they will only apply for one type of course at five different universities, such as Geography at Durham University, Geography at Kings College London etc. However, it might be that they want to study a subject such as Anthropology, which at some universities would be a single honours degree but at another university could be a joint honours degree, such as Anthropology and Archeology. As long as there is a clear theme to their course choices, which they explain well in their personal statement, the exact course pupils apply for may be different from one university to another.

Pupils need to think carefully about the five courses they apply to and their entry requirements so that they cover a range of outcomes, because where they end up studying will depend on what their final results are. One or two of the course choices they make should match their predicted grades, one or two should be a choice which is more ambitious and asks for slightly higher grades than they are predicted, and one should be a choice which asks for slightly lower than their current or predicted grades.

Those applying for Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science can only make up to four choices for these subjects, although they do have an option to make a fifth choice for a different course. For more information about these courses go to page 29.

Personal statement

A conditional offer means that the university will offer The personal statement is a very important part of the application process. Admissions tutors read personal statements to compare all the applications they get for a course, so this is where pupils should describe their ambitions, skills, experiences, interest in the subject they are applying for and why they’d make a great undergraduate student. The personal statement can be up to 4000 characters. For more information and tips on supporting pupils with personal statements, go to page 30.

Reference

After a pupil has written and submitted their personal statement, a member of staff at their school (normally the Head of Sixth Form) will compile a reference for them. These commonly draw upon ‘mini references’ submitted by the pupils’ subject teachers. They will include things like a pupil’s work ethic, how they work with their peers and their suitability for university. Pupils won’t have access to this section and don’t need to do anything for it. After references have been completed, applications are electronically finalized and sent to UCAS, who then send on applications to the universities. Pupils should keep in touch with their form tutors and head of year so that they know how their reference is going and when it has been sent to UCAS.
Important UCAS dates
There are fixed dates and deadlines pupils will need to meet when they make their UCAS application. The dates covering the majority of courses are set out in the Futures programme timelines on pages 4 and 5, but some art and design and other courses have different deadlines – for deadlines relating to all courses, head to the UCAS website. Pupils need to be clear on the deadlines for their chosen courses and universities. Schools will also set their own internal deadlines to ensure there is time for re-drafting of personal statements and references before final submission. We strongly encourage pupils to make an early application to university – for most people this means by the end of November of Year 13. Some, although not all, universities will begin offering places in September of Year 13 when the very earliest applications will come in to them, even though the deadline for many of these courses will not be until the 15 January. If pupils apply earlier, universities will have a smaller pool of applications to consider and more available places on their courses to offer. It is a great boost to confidence and motivation to get an early offer and as long as pupils are well prepared and have created a fantastic personal statement, it will not harm their application to submit it early but may help them secure the offers they want. N.B. If pupils want to submit an early application they will need to let their form tutor know because their reference will need to be written before their application can be submitted.

Application terms
Firm/Insurance choices
Once pupils have received offers from their universities, they will be asked to pick a firm (first choice) and insurance (second choice) course. All other offers will be discarded.

Conditional offer
A conditional offer means that the university will offer a pupil a place if they meet their set criteria, which is usually based on their qualifications. The conditions may vary, for example they may be asked to get specific grades or UCAS points in specific subject/modules. The offer is conditional on pupils getting the required grades in their exams.

Unconditional offer
An unconditional offer means the university is happy to accept a pupil because they have already met their entry requirements. The place is now theirs if you want it. The offer still stands regardless of any future qualifications they receive.

Unsuccessful application
A pupil’s application can be unsuccessful if the university has decided not to offer them a place on the course they have applied for. Universities can decline pupils’ applications for various reasons, for example if the course is full or if they did not meet their criteria. Usually they provide a reason for their decline but if they do not, pupils can contact them to see if they will provide a reason for their decision.

Withdrawn application
Pupils can withdraw an application if they have changed their mind and do not want to go to the university. The university can also withdraw their offer for various reasons, for example pupils have not responded to their letters or emails or did not attend an interview.

Clearing
If pupils do not meet the grade requirements for their firm or insurance choice university, they can still find a place at another university through Clearing. From mid-August until late September, the Clearing process allows them to choose a course that is about to begin. Spaces which are open on courses at universities will be advertised online. Pupils must contact these institutions directly to apply for the place. If they do not get into their chosen university, it is important that they apply for clearing as soon as possible to stand the best chance of getting onto another course that they are interested in, if they decide that they still want to go to university and feel that they would be happy studying somewhere else. Schools normally support pupils through the Clearing process.

Adjustment
Adjustment is available to those who meet and exceed their conditional firm offer. It allows pupils to search for another course within five days whilst still holding their firm place. Pupils who enter Adjustment, but do not find a new institution, keep their place at their original firm choice. It is quite similar to the clearing process – they must get in touch with the university themselves and see if there are any places available on the course they want to study.
Getting the application right

Pupils might find it helpful to visit the following websites to get some more information about the university application process:

- www.purepotential.org
- www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/universities/applying-to-university-and-ucas-deadlines/

Medicine, dentistry, veterinary science and courses at the University of Oxford and Cambridge

Any medicine, dentistry and veterinary science courses and all courses at the University of Oxford and Cambridge (Oxbridge) require applications almost a year in advance of their start dates. If pupils are looking to apply to these courses or universities, they will need to start doing their research and making an application early.

Application deadline

The deadline for the above courses is the 15 October. We advise that you pupils put their applications in by the 10 October to allow for any last minute computer or IT problems. Pupils should work with their school to ensure their reference and personal statement have been finalised well in advance of this deadline.

Admission tests

For many of the above courses pupils will need to take an admission tests. Most admissions tests happen very early, possibly before the application deadline of the 15 October, so they will need to register for them in advance. They should research any tests they may need to take, find out what they need to do to register, where to sit them, what sitting them might cost and how they will prepare for them. Although pupils cannot revise for these tests like they can for an exam, they will need to practice the kinds of questions which come up in the tests and in some cases will need to demonstrate skills such as making an argument or drawing conclusions, which they can prepare for. They will also need to think about their strategy for time management during the tests so that they give the right amount of time to all the relevant questions and sections.

Some of the most common tests are listed here:
- Law – Cambridge Law Test and LNAT (Law National Aptitude Test)
- Mathematics – MAT (mathematics aptitude test) and STEP (sixth term examination papers)
- Medical course tests – BMAT (BioMedical Admissions Test) and UKCAT (UK Clinical Aptitude Test)
- Thinking skills assessment (TSA) – TSA Cambridge, TSA Oxford and TSA University College London

Interviews

For many of the above courses pupils will need to have an interview. They should begin to develop their interview skills well in advance of being called for an interview, and even before they submit their application. Try to give your mentee a mock interview and encourage them to practice talking to others, especially those they don’t know so well, about the passion and interest they have in their subject. For some courses, particularly medicine courses, they may have different type of interviews, such as the ‘multiple or multi mini’ – a series of short, structured interview stations used to assess non-cognitive skills. Make sure your mentee knows what format the interview will take so that they know how to prepare for it.
The personal statement is read by all admissions tutors for all the courses that pupils apply for. It is the best chance they will have to gain a sense of the type of person they are and whether they have the right motivations and behaviours for wanting to study their course and so getting the personal statement right really matters. Some information, tips and style hints to help your mentees draft their personal statement can be found below. Generally speaking, we recommend pupils do no more than four or five drafts before submitting their personal statement.

**The perspective of the admissions tutor**

When pupils are writing their personal statement, they should think of the perspective of the admissions tutor. They will often be reading hundreds of personal statements and for this reason will be thinking initially of reasons to decline applications rather than reasons to accept them. This means pupils need to be engaging and interesting to read about, but that they also need to get the basics right like spelling, punctuation and grammar. They should write their personal statement in such a way which means the admissions tutor can imagine pupils in front of them and can connect with their writing.

**Purpose of the personal statement:**

- Allows pupils to ‘sell themselves’.
- Tells admissions tutors what makes them a good candidate beyond their academic qualifications and sets them apart from other candidates.

**Structure – how should it be set out?**

- 4,000 characters (including spaces) make sure all the characters available are used and get the most information they can about themselves into their statement.
- Leave blank lines for paragraphs.
- It must have a clear beginning, middle and end.
- Use a clear font eg. Times New Roman or Arial font size 12 (this is shrunk to A5).
- Prepare the statement offline then copy and paste into the UCAS Apply system.

**Content – what should they put in it?**

Why have they chosen the subject/s they are applying for? Has there been a trigger which fuelled their interest in it? They mustn’t feel tempted to use quotes or say “I’ve always wanted to study…”! They should explain why they feel a draw to this subject, especially if it is one they haven’t studied before. They can be bold and take a position in their personal statement, and should avoid being bland.

- Can they show their commitment to the subject?
  Wider reading, development of passion or additional study? What have they done to further their interest in it the subject and nurture this in their spare time? They should talk about things they have done over and above studying the subject in school. They should give one to three example of things they have done in the last few months but no more, and talk about why the things they have done have been important, interesting or enlightening – not just list them. What impact have these things had on them?
- Why is this the right degree for them? (In terms of course and structure)
- How has their academic study prepared them for it?
- What they hope to gain from the course and university as a whole? (This should only be a closing paragraph).

The trick in all of this is to relate things – work experience, interests and achievements to how they link to the course and university life. Remember, it isn’t just about what they have done but what they have gained from it.
Specific things to mention in their personal statement

- Projects, individual studies and field trips.
- Preferences within the subject (e.g. poetry).
- Reading (be specific).
- Subject-related lectures, workshops etc.
- Work experience, holiday or weekend jobs.
- Voluntary work.
- Positions of responsibility/membership of societies.
- What they hope to gain from their degree.
- Interesting personal facts (bilingual, particular achievements).
- Their resilience and independent living skills – and admissions tutor wants to know they are ready for university life and not just about their academic abilities.

Tips

Openings

In 2012/13 over 540,000 applications were made to UK universities – that’s a lot of personal statements for admissions tutors to read. If they are going to capture the attention of admissions tutors they need to make sure they have a great opening! Here are some things to consider for a great opening:

- Why they are applying for the course has to be at the heart of their opening.
- Make it personal - remember it is a personal statement.
- Avoid obvious statements and cliché (e.g “I am passionate about…”).
- Be specific.
- Admissions tutors are clear that they do not just want to know what pupils have read or done as a factual list, but what they have learnt from it, how it has challenged their thinking or developed their passion for their course.

Avoid starting too many sentences with ‘I’:

- I am captain of the school football team...
  Being captain of the school football team...
- I am studying A levels in...
  My A level subjects have...
- I have gained a number of skills...
  The skills I have gained from...

Useful expressions:

- In addition; as well as; besides; more recently; provided.
- Enabled me; opportunity to; reinforce; strengthen.
- Enthusiasm; stimulating; exciting; independence.

Developing a personal statement

In their own handbook, pupils have a table to complete to gather information for their personal statements. You can refer to it in your meetings with them to reflect on how trips, projects or work experience relate to the course they want to study and the skills they developed through them. Encourage them to complete it so they can build a series of examples to use when writing their personal statement.

For examples of effective (and less effective!) personal statement paragraphs, see the last two pages of this Sutton Trust report.
Making choices

The 3Ls tool
When thinking about universities you should encourage your mentee to consider the 3Ls. Ask them to consider the points below for each of the Ls.

Location – for some people this is crucial, others are more flexible about where they will travel to.
- Is location an important factor to me?
- Where are my top universities (place them on a map)?
- How will I get there / home to visit family / friends? What are my travel options and timings?
- What is the cost of living at this university?
- What is it near to? What do I know about the town?

Learning – consider the type of course, how do you learn and under which conditions you’ll perform best academically
- What balance between exams and coursework would you like?
- Do you want a traditional or more modern course?
- What mix of tutorial / supervisions or lectures / seminars would you like?
- What is the workload going to be like?
- Is there any flexibility on the course – to choose different modules to study for example, or even a module outside of your main discipline?
- What contact time would you like – are you an independent learner or do you prefer more support?

Lifestyle – what else can universities offer?
- Collegiate universities – these are smaller and can provide more of a sense of community.
- What accommodation and other facilities are on offer?
- What extra-curricular activities are available?
- Do you want to be in a town / city or on a campus? How big is the town / campus and what’s the atmosphere like?

Think through each of the bullets and do research on areas you are not sure about. For each of the 3Ls, establish and list what are:
- The deal breakers.
- The must haves.
- The would be nice to haves.

Ensure that any university you shortlist meets everything you have set out in your ‘deal breakers’ list.

Linked competency: Aspiration & ambition
Decision making tool

Deciding where to apply to university is probably the biggest decision young people will have had to make at this point in their lives. Run through the following process to help your mentee feel comfortable about making this decision.

1) Be aware that when we don’t know what to do, we can sometimes rush in to a decision or avoid making one. Recognise that it’s a big decision to make and that feeling uncertain is perfectly normal – this is a decision that will need careful consideration.

2) Work out what the root of the uncertainty is or what your unanswered questions are – is it whether or not to go to university at all, where to study or whether to move away from home?

3) Set about gathering information on your unanswered questions – the benefits and downsides to university study, or how far each university you are considering is from home, for example.

4) Based on all the information you have gathered, establish what range of options are available to you.

5) Evaluate your options. Being honest, think about the pros and cons of each option, and the probability of personal success for each. Reflect on your skills, talents, passions and values – do they match up with your options?

6) Imagine you’ve made a decision and ‘sleep on it’. Do you feel light or constrained? Gauging your perceived reaction can really help identify which is the best decision for you.

Useful links for exploring options, choosing universities and choosing a course

- www.ucas.com
- www.unistats.com
- www.unifrog.org
- www.push.co.uk
- www.whatuni.com

Open days

A list of university open days is available at www.opendays.com. If the open day of your chosen university has passed, it can be worth contacting their admissions department to ask about individual tours or other opportunities for potential students.

Unifrog is an online platform that makes it easy for pupils to find and apply for the best courses and universities for them. They can explore a range of courses and institutions based on their key stage five qualifications and predicted grades, and sort options by a range of features including entry criteria, applicants per place and student satisfaction ratings.

All Futures pupils will have received a log in code for Unifrog, and the platform enables them to shortlist courses and universities and save and print in a PDF format. Particularly during your early meetings, when they are finalising their university application choices, spending some time discussing shortlisted courses or working through the shortlisting process may prove a very productive use of time.

If they have misplaced their log in code, they should contact access@teachfirst.org.uk.
**Firm and Insurance choices**

Before the start of May, your mentee will need to make one firm and one insurance choice from the five courses that they applied to.

Use the worksheet below to help guide thinking about which course would be best for them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course title</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Conditional offer (eg. ABB)</th>
<th>My predicted grades</th>
<th>Course pros</th>
<th>Course cons</th>
<th>University pros</th>
<th>University cons</th>
<th>Firm / Insurance choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
For pupils, getting their head around what a degree costs, what loans and grants are available to them and how to fund their way through university can be difficult. There are also many myths about the financial side of university and media stories which don’t reflect factual information. It’s really important that pupils read up on university finance - no one should be wrongly put off university thinking they can’t afford it.

**University fees – the key facts**

- Universities are able to charge up to £9,250 per year in fees (called ‘tuition fees’). A university can charge different fees for different courses – it is up to each university to decide.
- Students don’t have to pay the tuition fees upfront – all students studying for their first full time undergraduate degree can get a loan to cover the cost of their tuition fees.
- Students can get loans and some special non-repayable grants (for example if they have a disability or are a carer) towards living costs. Up to 65% of the maximum living cost will be available to everyone. Financial support is also available from universities in the form of bursaries, scholarships and fee waivers.
- Students’ eligibility for grants, extra student loans and bursaries will depend (in most cases) on family income, where they are studying, and whether they have a disability or caring responsibilities.
- For some cases, such as NHS funded courses or for some individuals (such as disabled students or those in care) there may be additional financial support.
- Students do not need to pay back their loans until they are earning above a certain amount (at the moment this is £21,000).
- Loans are paid back straight from a graduate’s salary as a percentage of what they earn over the threshold, a bit like paying taxes (at the moment this is 9% of anything earned over £21,000). However they will accumulate interest on their loan and will need to pay this back too.
- 30 years after graduation, any outstanding debt is wiped.

**How you can help your mentees**

Every pupil’s financial situation is different, so they will need to read up on the information which is most relevant to them. While there is a lot of focus on the cost of tuition fees, it is the cost of living which is a challenge for many students. It is crucial that they understand budgeting and can stick to a budget so that their money isn’t all spent in the first few weeks of term.

**Online tools:**

Understanding student finance and finance calculators:

[www.gov.uk/student-finance-calculator](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance-calculator)
[www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-tuition-fees-changes](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-tuition-fees-changes)

Budgeting:

[www.moneyadviseservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviseservice.org.uk)
[www.studentcalculator.org](http://www.studentcalculator.org)
Most pupils on the Futures programme will be working through UCAS during the first half of their mentoring relationship (and phase 3 of the programme). Those applying to Oxford or Cambridge, or for medicine, dentistry or veterinary sciences will be working to much earlier deadlines – for more information on applications to those universities and courses see page 29. A small number of pupils, however, will not be going through UCAS at this time. Meetings with those pupils should make use of the coaching models on pages 24 and 25 to establish areas of focus – maybe competency development or support with other types of applications. We have collated some advice and guidance for helping those mentees below.

**Alternative post-18 pathways**

For information about alternatives to university, including school leaver programmes and apprenticeships, please see [section 2 of our Access Toolkit](#).

Here you will find information about the entry requirements, formats of learning and assessment and links to further guidance that you can share with pupils.

**Gap years**

Section 2 of our Access Toolkit also includes information about gap years – other useful websites include:

- [UCAS gap year advice](#)
- [Prospects](#)
- [Government gap year travel advice](#)

**Re-sitting Year 12**

The principle focus for pupils re-sitting Year 12 is to ensure they improve their academic outcomes from last year. Some useful points for discussion might be:

- Their exam papers from last year – have they been through them with their subject teachers? Are they clear on their unique areas for development?
- Revision timetabling and strategies – do they have time allotted to revision? How do they revise? They could explore the techniques described on the [ExamTime website](#) and produce an effective revision timetable at:
  - [Exam Time](#)
  - [Get Revising](#)
  - [Revision World](#)
- Use the target chart on page 40 to support them in evaluating what they want for their future – this will help them to stay focused and contextualise all of their hard work.
In order to achieve a place at university and go on to graduate and secure a job, we believe that pupils should develop a set of six competencies, set out below, which will enable them to reach these goals. Think about how your mentees are developing these competencies during the programme, and try to factor in time to build on them during your meetings. Encourage pupils to reflect on how they are improving in these competencies over time, and identify areas they need to work on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiative and independence</td>
<td>Pupils manage their time and responsibilities independently, proactively seek out opportunities for development, can look after themselves and are developing skills vital for independent living. They ‘go the extra mile’ whenever possible, and do things for themselves or others without needing to be asked to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspiration and ambition</td>
<td>Pupils strive to be the best they can be, set high expectations and ambitious goals for themselves and have a plan in place to reach those goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Pupils speak and write articulately, engagingly, and accurately, structuring their arguments clearly. They are able to adapt to different purposes and audiences, listen carefully, and use body language and eye contact appropriately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Pupils have a positive attitude to studying, and work hard to achieve their grade goals. They read around their subjects, developing specific areas of interest based on their own independent reading and research, and are aware of the wider world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research, planning and organisation</td>
<td>Pupils have developed effective research skills, can independently gather a range of information and can break down the achievement of a larger goal into a series of smaller steps, anticipating challenges and working out how to overcome them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Pupils have a deep level of self-awareness and understanding with respect to who they are and what their talents, passions, skills and interests are.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Work with your mentee to look at Futures competencies on the priorities wheel below. Which ones are their strengths? Which ones would they like to develop further with your help? Using the descriptions on page 37, ask your mentee to give each competency a score out of 8. (They should give your strengths a higher score, and the competencies they want to get better at a lower score). Shade in each segment of the wheel to reflect the rating.

**The first competency I would like to develop is:**

E.g. 1. Independence and initiative

**The second competency I would like to develop is:**

E.g. 5. Research, planning and organisation

**Why did you give this competency the lowest score?**

(Use the descriptions in the previous table to help you identify specific reasons for your rating)

E.g. I feel that I have a positive attitude towards my studies, but I would like to work more on my professional communication skills.

E.g. I would like to learn how I can manage my time better to prepare for my exams. I sometimes procrastinate and end up cramming my revision in at the last minute!

Now that they have had the opportunity to reflect on all of the competencies, use the priorities wheel to identify which ones they rated the lowest. These are the competencies they should focus on developing first with your support. Fill in the action plan below with your mentee to plan how you will work on these competencies together over the coming weeks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What will you do with your mentor to help you develop this competency? (Try and think of some practical activities you can complete together during your meetings – list as many ideas as possible!)</th>
<th>E.g. I will practise writing a covering letter for a job and my mentor could give me some feedback to help me improve it.</th>
<th>E.g. We will work together to create a revision timetable to help me prepare for my end of year exams. We will also research some revision techniques that I could try during my mocks.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When will you have completed your first activity together? (Choose a realistic time frame so you can check your progress)</td>
<td>E.g. I will have written my covering letter before our next meeting in 6 weeks.</td>
<td>E.g. We will research revision techniques I can try during our next meeting (which is taking place in 6 weeks). We will have created a revision timetable together by the end of the Easter Holidays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will you know that you have met your target of developing this competency? (How will you measure your success?)</td>
<td>E.g. I will have re-drafted my covering letter with the improvements my mentor has suggested. I will feel more confident that I can write a strong covering letter on my own in the future.</td>
<td>E.g. I will have a comprehensive revision timetable that I will stick to during my end of year exams. I will be able to use revision techniques that suit the way I like to learn.</td>
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**Helping your mentee to reflect**

Reflection is a powerful tool and can help with self-improvement as students asses and reflect on the decisions they have made or experiences they have had and use this learning to construct plans for the future.

Encourage your mentee to:

- Give themselves time and a comfortable space in which to reflect.
- Look back through their thoughts and experiences – relive them in their minds, contemplating how they felt and why they felt as they did.
- Take notice of non-verbal cues – a smile or frown, for example. This information can speak volumes about the reality behind your reflections.
- Be aware of intuitions and gut feelings as they reflect – reflections are a good way of helping them to improve their sensing and feeling skills.
- Write down their thoughts and reflect regularly – the more they do it the easier it becomes.
Target setting and action planning

Consider SMART targets (specific, measured, achievable, realistic, time-bound) with your mentee. Try to close each session with a review of your agreed targets and actions (for both of you) before your next meeting and both write these down. You can really help your mentee by pushing them to set ambitious goals for themselves and by helping them to break down bigger goals into smaller, more manageable ones.

Use the action planning grid below to create specific targets and deadlines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus area</th>
<th>Current situation</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Measures of success</th>
<th>Actions required</th>
<th>Deadlines</th>
<th>Additional support needed</th>
<th>Motivation to complete actions</th>
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**Target chart**

Completing this chart can help your mentee to understand themselves better. This information can then be used to inform decisions and once decisions have been made, your mentee can refer back to this chart to see if those decisions are in keeping with who they are and what is important to them.

Students should write words or phrases in each of the rings, using the descriptions below to help them.

- **What are your passions?** This means something you feel strongly about or have enthusiasm for.
- **What are your values?** This means the qualities or things that are most important in your life.
- **What are your traits and strengths?** What are you like as a person? How would friends and family describe you?
- **What are your skills?** What are you good at and what comes easily for you?
Opportunities

There are lots of opportunities offered by universities, charities, businesses and other organisations to help young people gain an insight into university or a particular course or career. They can be single day activities or week long summer schools. Below are a few we recommend but it is also worth approaching universities or professional organisations directly to see what they might offer.

Summer schools and taster courses

UNIQ summer schools
UNIQ is a programme of free residential visits in July and August for Year 12 students currently studying at a UK state school. UNIQ students follow a week long academic course designed and taught by lecturers and tutors at Oxford University, as well as taking part in social activities, networking with alumni of the university and talking to current students.

Go to www.uniq.ox.ac.uk. The deadline for applications is usually around February.

Sutton Trust summer schools
These are week long summer schools held at top universities across the UK. Designed to give bright students from disadvantaged backgrounds a taste of life at a leading university. The aim is to demystify elite universities and to equip pupils with the knowledge and insight to make high quality applications to prestigious universities.

Go to www.suttontrust.com/summer-schools. Applications open in January each year and close in March.

Eton College universities summer school
This summer school is a ten day residential course. Applicants should be capable of studying at Oxford or Cambridge. As far as possible the course supplements normal school work and avoids the topics covered during A level teaching. A fee is associated with this summer school but there is the option to get part or the whole of it reimbursed.

Go to www.etoncollege.com
The deadline for applications is usually around the end of February.

Subject or university specific opportunities

‘Access To’ university schemes
Some universities provide support to pupils from families and communities that have little or no experience of higher education. Here are some of them. Search on each university website for specific details.

- University of Birmingham – Access to Birmingham (a2b)
- University of Bristol – Access to Bristol
- University of Leeds – Access to Leeds
- University of Manchester – Manchester Access Programme
- University of Newcastle – PARTNERS
- University of Southampton – Access to Southampton (A2S)
- University of Warwick – AWARDS
- University of York – York Access Scheme

In2science
In2scienceUK provide a programme for gifted year 12 pupils from low income backgrounds. Pupils considering studying science, technology, engineering or maths (STEM) at university attend skills days and workshops and receive advice on UCAS applications. The highlight of the programme is a two week placement in a real research lab over the summer, where pupils work alongside practicing scientists to gain insight into scientific research.

Go to www.in2scienceuk.org for more information. The application deadline is usually late March.

Linked competencies: Curiosity, initiative & independence
Nuffield Research Placements

Nuffield Foundation Science Bursaries offer up to 1,000 bursaries a year for pupils to work alongside practising scientists, technologists, engineers and mathematicians. Projects take place during the summer holidays, giving pupils an insight into the world of scientific research and development. Pupils in the first year of a post-16 Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) course are eligible to apply for a bursary of £80 per week to support them during their project. Placements are available across the UK, in universities, industry or research institutions.

Go to www.nuffieldfoundation.org/nuffield-research-placements for more information. The deadline is usually around May.

Access to medicine

The British Medical association produces a booklet listing all widening access programmes run by medical schools across the UK.

Visit www.bma.org.uk for more information.

EDT STEM placements

The Engineering Development Trust (EDT) is the largest provider of STEM enrichment activities for young people in the UK. They offer a number of projects for Year 12 pupils including STEM experience courses at universities and the opportunity to work on real life six month STEM projects with participating organisations.


General support programmes and young people’s projects

The Amos Bursary

The Amos Bursary exists to assist academically able British young men from inner city schools with family connections to Africa and the Caribbean. They help these young men to realise their full potential by providing support to prepare them to access top universities, be ready for the world of work and to become future leaders. Students are selected to take part in the programme.

Go to www.amosbursary.org.uk for more information.

The Challenge Network

The Challenge Network works to build the skills of and connect young people together across all walks of life. The Challenge is an opportunity for 16 and 17 year olds to take part in ‘challenges’ in the summer after exams which build real world skills that universities and employers are looking for. Places are heavily subsidised, but do cost £50 although discounts and bursaries are available.

Go to www.the-challenge.org for more information.

Spark and Mettle

Spark and Mettle help young people to uncover their potential and harness it into a fulfilling career. They also help pupils to make connections with individuals and organisations who can help them realise their career aspirations.

Go to www.sparkandmettle.org.uk for more information.

Brightside

Brightside provide support and information for young people to help them to realise their education or career ambitions. They have an online mentoring project and run Bright Knowledge – an online resource and knowledge bank with information about careers, education and student life.

Go to www.brightlinks.org and www.brightknowledge.org for more information.

IntoUniversity

IntoUniversity provides local learning centres where young people are inspired to achieve. Each local centre offers an innovative programme to support young people to either attain a university place or another chosen aspiration.

Go to www.intouniversity.org for more information.

Volunteering

The website www.do-it.org.uk matches those who want to volunteer with opportunities to get involved. Volunteering is a great way to gain an insight into different careers and help build key skills such as teamwork and communication.
Websites for careers information and careers guidance

**Access Professions**

[www.accessprofessions.com](http://www.accessprofessions.com)

This website pulls together lots of opportunities offered by universities, businesses, charities and other organisations for young people interested in entering a profession.

**Taste of Medicine**

[www.tasteofmedicine.com](http://www.tasteofmedicine.com)

Taste of Medicine is a website dedicated to providing information and guidance to young people thinking about a career in healthcare.

**Go Think Big**

[www.gothinkbig.co.uk](http://www.gothinkbig.co.uk)

Go Think Big is a one stop shop designed for young people. It has advice and support on getting work experience, developing skills and tools to create career opportunities.

**National Careers Service**

[nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)

The National Careers Service website provides careers advice and information on a wide range of jobs, training course resources and funding.

**Career Pilot**

[www.careerpilot.org.uk](http://www.careerpilot.org.uk)

Career Pilot offers guidance on the routes into a wide range of job sectors, as well as information about higher education and its alternatives.
High quality mentoring practice

In groups of 3 or 4, read the case study on Joe Bloggs, and fill out his ‘pyramid of priorities’, with the key focus for Joe at the top of the pyramid, working down to the least important priorities. Then, hold a GROW mentoring discussion using the model on page 24, one person taking the role of Joe, one person taking the role of mentor, and any remaining group members to observe and peer assess, using the checklist and lines overleaf. Make time at the end to feedback.

Joe achieved A*s across his GCSEs, and is currently studying English literature, history, German and drama at A Level. His mock exam results in January were disappointing, a mixture of Ds and Es, and he is not convinced his end of year exams were any better. He is considering studying Law at university, but isn’t sure whether this is the right choice for him, and hasn’t considered which institution/s he might like to attend. He has a really supportive form tutor who has seen and fed back on drafts of his personal statement, and he is due to have a talk from Student Finance England at the start of Year 13. He lacks confidence during your initial meeting, struggling to maintain eye contact or speak in complete sentences. Joe is a member of a big family with four younger siblings, likes football, and recently visited Germany on an exchange.

Priority options:
- Student finance/budgeting
- University accommodation
- Personal statement
- Work experience
- Interview practice
- Choosing a course
- Choosing a university
- Finding information about open days
- Revision support
- Time management strategies
- Summer schemes
- Making the most of university

Peer assessment checklist
- Reference your mentee’s extracurricular interests in meetings and emails.
- Ask open questions
- Share your own experiences
- Eye contact
- Open body language
Mentor launch resources

Notes:
Getting to know you activity

Try to spend around 15 minutes getting to know your mentee/s, and letting them get to know you. Try to capture any key details below – this will help inform your later interactions, and support you in building a relationship moving forward.

Optional activity: Pick a question from the list, and answer yourself, before giving your mentee/s the opportunity to answer. Then ask a mentee to pick a question to answer, before answering yourself and hearing from your other mentee (if applicable). Continue in this way for a few rounds, capturing your mentees’ interests and thoughts below. Ask questions where appropriate, and if your mentee/s struggles with a question, move on.

Tell me about...

1. Your home town
2. Your school/place of work
3. Your sibling/s
4. What takes up most of your time outside of school/work
5. The most recent film you saw
6. The app you use most on your phone
7. The part of your work/school day that you dread the most
8. The part of your work/school day that you enjoy the most
9. A project you are working on
10. Something that frustrates or annoys you
11. Something you are passionate about
12. Advice you would give to someone starting in your workplace/sixth form
13. Something you have always wanted to learn how to do
14. A role model in your life
15. A television programme you love, or can’t stand
Pyramid of priorities activity

Working out what you are going to focus on with your mentees over the coming year is an essential part of this first meeting, and will support you both in organising your meetings and actions moving forward. Talk through and fill in the two pyramids here, one for each mentee, using the options at the bottom. Emphasise that the pyramid is a living document, and come back to it with your mentee regularly. What has been ticked off, and what priorities may have moved up or down the pyramid? You may also wish to discuss what support they have already received from school.

Priority options:
- Student finance/budgeting
- University accommodation
- Personal statement
- Work experience
- Interview practice
- Choosing a course
- Choosing a university
- Finding information about open days
- Revision support
- Time management strategies
- Summer schemes
- Making the most of university

Mentee: ______________________
Priority options:
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Mentee: ______________________
Agreeing how you will work together

Understanding how you intend to work with your mentee/s and agreeing an approach with them now will make the process infinitely easier moving forward.

Take some time to discuss the below prompts, make some notes, and then sign your agreement – a gesture to show mutual commitment!

How often do we expect to email one another? When is the best time (e.g. weekdays before 6pm)? How long should it take us to reply to one another’s messages?

Where will our next three meetings take place? (Remember to let the lead teacher know of this arrangement, and if they need to ensure you can access your mentee’s school/book a meeting room for you if possible). Will we meet one to one, or as a group?

1) 
2) 
3) 

How will we decide what to focus on in each meeting? Prompt your mentee/s to lead on this question – would they like to send you an email a week before with the focus? Would they like you to suggest something from their pyramid?
What will we do after each meeting? Remember – you will be typing up the notes to send to both your mentee/s and their lead teacher, what will you expect them to do? Take any actions, and be ready to feedback at the next meeting?

When will our next meeting be?

Mentee signature: ______________________
Mentee signature: ______________________
Mentor signature: ______________________
If you’re born into a poorer family, success can seem like an impossible challenge.

From cradle to college to career, children from low-income communities find their paths to the future blocked again and again. Hurdles appear before them that don’t exist for those from wealthier families, making it virtually impossible to break through the ‘class ceiling’.

Our recent report reveals the extent of the problem, here is a snapshot...

Poorer children have less than half the chance of going to a school rated as Outstanding compared to their wealthier peers.

Even with a degree, young people from low-income communities get a 10% cut in pay compared to colleagues with the same qualifications.

In every part of the country a young person from a low-income community is less likely to take on an apprenticeship than their friends who are better off.

What else can you do?

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