

Section A: Introductory Principles; Admissions; Joining UCS

A.4 Admissions

Choosing the right school for your child is a very important decision. We do all that we can to help families to make the right choice. We strongly encourage personal visits (the precise arrangements for which vary between the UCS Junior Branch and Senior School, and particular details at each school can be found below).

Admissions decisions will be based upon the academic potential revealed by each candidate in examination, in interview and (where appropriate) activity and also upon the judgement of assessors in respect of a candidate's ability to make the most of the diverse opportunities on offer at UCS and to contribute positively to the life of the school and to the experience of other students. We will always seek a report from the candidate's current school, and take full account of it in balancing all the available information before a decision is reached. An enthusiasm for the extra-curricular life of the school – supporting our long-standing traditions in music, art, drama, debating, community activities and sport - will be an advantage.

Open Evenings & School Visits (Senior School)

UCS Senior School holds Open Evenings which give a general introduction to the School and offer the chance to tour the site and facilities and to meet with a variety of teachers (including the Head) and pupils. The dates of these Open Evenings (usually in the Autumn Term) are published on our web-site and in our Prospectus pack, or can be found by telephoning the school. There is no need to pre-book for attendance at Senior School Open Evenings. At least two Open Evenings at the Senior School will be specifically directed towards Sixth Form entry.

In addition to Open Evenings, we are very happy to welcome families, with their children, separately for personal visits to the UCS schools during the school day. If time permits, this can also include a private meeting with the Head. These visits can be arranged by contacting the Admissions Secretary.

Application to UCS Senior School

Whilst UCS is an academically selective school, we are keen to invite and encourage applications from students of all backgrounds.

The school has no religious affiliation and was founded on the principle that the opportunity of an academically fulfilling education should be available to all who can benefit from it. Accordingly, we welcome families from all backgrounds to view the school and to register their sons or daughters for assessment. Whilst registrations will close a few weeks before any published assessment date, our aim is to manage the process in such a way as to make application as straightforward and simple as possible. There is a standard registration fee, to cover the costs of administration and

assessment. This fee will be waived in the case of candidates applying for fee assistance.

The Entry Procedure for UCS Senior School

UCS is an academically selective school. We make every effort to give candidates full opportunity to reveal their academic potential. So, our assessment procedures are not restricted to formal examinations. At every entry point, we aim to interview as many candidates as resources permit. We also broaden the interview process to include opportunities for group activity and for a simulated learning experience. In this way, we plan that the selection process will be able to identify potential rather than merely to reflect current educational experience.

The usual points of entry are at 11 years (Year 7), 13 years (Year 9) and 16 years (Year 12).

Vacancies may occasionally arise at other ages. The Senior School Admissions Secretary will be happy to give details of the application process.

The process of application always requires the completion of a Registration Form, which must be signed by both parents. The deadlines for application are published on the school web-site and in our Prospectus Information Booklet. A registration fee is normally required but is waived where candidates are applying for fee assistance.

Equal Treatment

In accordance with the aims of our founders, UCS is committed to equal treatment for all, regardless of a race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or social background. Our provision for fee assistance is described below. Our aim is to encourage applications from candidates with as diverse a range of backgrounds as possible. This enriches our community and helps to prepare pupils for their lives beyond school. Means-tested fee assistance is available in order to enable as many as possible who meet the school's admission criteria to attend the school.

Special Needs

We do not discriminate in any way regarding entry. We welcome pupils with special educational needs, providing that our Learning Support Department can offer them the support that they require. We welcome pupils with physical disabilities, conscious that there are some areas in our older buildings to which access may be difficult in certain cases. We advise parents of children with special educational needs or physical disabilities to discuss their child's requirements with the Headmaster before registration is completed, so that we can be sure that adequate provision can be made, both in the assessment process and, if admitted, during the student's school career. Parents should always inform us of any Special Needs that their son or daughter might have; such information will never adversely prejudice an application. The school must be provided with a copy of a relevant report from an Educational Psychologist,

doctor, or other health professional in order for appropriate judgements to be made. It is not possible to make any adjustment to the admission process (for example, to offer a candidate additional time) in the absence of such a report.

We will discuss thoroughly with parents and their medical advisers the adjustments that can reasonably be made for the child if he/she becomes a pupil at the school.

The Assessment Process

No specific preparation for the entrance tests is needed, all candidates start on an equal footing, with identical opportunities to display their academic aptitude and personal skills.

Decisions will be based on the academic potential revealed by each candidate, in examination, interview and (where appropriate) activity and also upon the judgement of assessors in respect of a candidate's ability to make the most of the diverse opportunities on offer at UCS and to contribute positively to the life of the school and to the experience of other students. An enthusiasm for the extra-curricular life of the school – supporting our long-standing traditions in music, drama, art, debating, community activities and sport – will be an advantage.

Entry at Year 7 at the Senior School: All candidates sit papers in English, Maths and Verbal & Non-verbal Reasoning, which are designed for their age group. Candidates who are successful in the examination will be recalled for interview, which will include group activity, group interview and personal interview.

Entry at Year 9 to the Senior School: All candidates are initially required to sit a Preliminary Assessment (in English, Maths and Verbal & Non-Verbal Reasoning) in the Autumn Term of Year 7. Candidates who are successful in the examination will be recalled for interview, which will include group activity, group interview and personal interview. Following this, offers will be made which remain conditional upon success at Common Entrance (or an equivalent assessment) in the summer of Year 8.

Entry at Year 12 to the Senior School: All candidates sit a Thinking Skills Assessment and complete an essay paper in the Autumn Term of Year 11. The assessment process is identical for all applicants regardless of proposed subjects for further study. Candidates who are successful in the examination will be recalled for the interview process, involving two separate interviews for each applicant. Offers of places at this level are not conditional upon GCSE grades.

Whenever a candidate is applying from a school other than UCS, a full academic and personal report will be sought from the candidate's current school.

The key dates for all aspects of our assessment process for the current year are published on our web site.

Sibling Policy

Whilst we are very happy to welcome siblings at UCS, admission is not automatic. Siblings must go through the same process as all other applicants at their chosen point of entry. Siblings will not be admitted if we believe that they are unlikely to thrive within the UCS environment or if we think that their admission in preference to another candidate would be unfair.

Fee Assistance

In our efforts to ensure the widest possible access to a UCS education, we are keen to provide financial assistance to candidates who qualify for a place on the basis of aptitude and ability but who would otherwise be unable to take up a place (or would find it very hard to do so) as a result of family financial circumstances.

It is UCS policy that fee assistance should be directed primarily on the basis of need and will, therefore, almost invariably, take account of the financial circumstances of candidates' families.

Families who would like to be considered for fee assistance are asked to make this clear at the appropriate point on the UCS Registration Form. Guidance regarding qualification for fee assistance may be found on the school's web-site or in our specific documentation. All families who request such consideration will be required to complete a full and confidential Financial Disclosure Form.

The assessment process for candidates who may qualify for financial assistance is identical to that for all other candidates.

Applying for fee assistance

We are keen that the opportunity to attend UCS should not be denied to students on the sole basis of their family's financial circumstances. Accordingly, we have in place a scheme that enables us to offer fee assistance where pupils have qualified for entry to the school and where such assistance is warranted on the basis of need. We cannot guarantee to be able to support every applicant who falls into this category but we are eager to support as many as possible.

Fee assisted places are available to students who join the school at Year 7 or at Year 12. Parents must indicate on the registration form that they would like to be considered for financial support. All such fee assistance is means-tested in accordance with the criteria published on the school's web site, and requires the completion of a confidential Financial Disclosure Form, on which both parents are required to provide proof of their income and assets. The level of support varies according to parental need; but can extend to 100% remission in cases of proven need.

All fee assistance is offered for 12 months at a time. The family is required to provide fresh information about its circumstances for every year that their child attends the school. Levels of support may vary with fluctuations in family financial circumstances.

Cases of hardship

In addition to fee assistance that is provided upon entry to UCS, the school maintains an annual Hardship Fund for families whose circumstances change after their son or daughter has been admitted to the school. In order to qualify for hardship assistance, families must be able to show a material and significant change in their circumstances that could not have been predicted at the time that a fee-paying place was accepted. The criteria for the award of hardship funding is, in other respects, the same as for all other fee assistance, but, since funds are limited, hardship funding is not automatic. Hardship funding is always temporary and is aimed to help a family to avoid disruption to their child's education by enabling him/her to remain at UCS until the next 'break-point' in the educational process.

Our Fee Assistance Policy can be viewed on our web site, or can be obtained from the UCS Bursary Department.

Academic Awards

UCS does not offer fee assistance simply on the grounds of recognised academic ability. We, therefore, do not offer traditional academic scholarships. The school will occasionally offer prizes to candidates whose performance in entrance tests is exemplary in order to recognise that achievement.

Music Awards

Music is a particular strength at UCS and we are keen to encourage talented musicians to join the school. Music Awards may be made to outstanding instrumentalists or singers. Awards are made on the basis of audition (conducted by the UCS Music Department with the guidance of an outside assessor). Auditions for candidates in Year 11 (either at UCS or at another school) are held in the Autumn Term. Auditions for candidates of other ages (normally planning to join UCS in Year 7 or Year 9) are held in the Spring Term. Advice and guidance regarding these auditions and informing about the arrangements for application is readily available from the UCS Music Department.

Music awards will only be made to students who have qualified for admission to UCS through our standard entrance procedures.

In addition to Standard Music Awards, Supplementary Music Awards are also available. These take into account family financial need as well as the musical ability and potential of the applicant. They may raise the value of an award as high as 100% of the termly fee. Families wishing to be considered for Supplementary Awards will be required to complete a confidential Financial Disclosure Form. Any award made will take this information into account alongside a judgement of the contribution that the student is likely to make to the musical life of the school.

The School's Contractual Terms & Conditions

Acceptance of any place at UCS requires the payment of a financial deposit and advance payment of a portion of the first term's fees (adjusted to take into account any fee assistance that has been granted). It also requires that the School's Admission Agreement is completed and signed by both parents and is returned to the school. A separate copy of the Terms and Conditions of this Agreement will be provided for retention by the family.