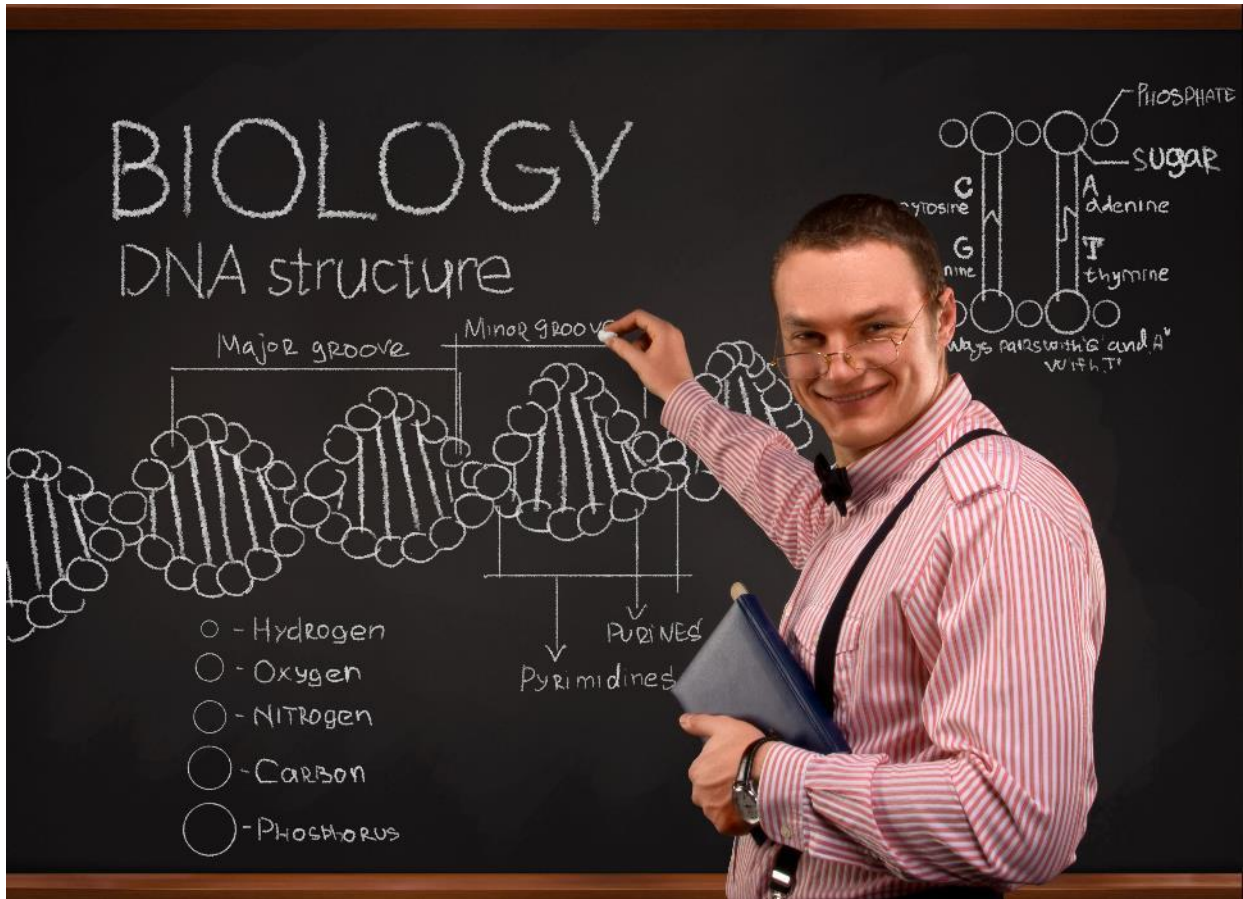


APPLYING FOR BIOLOGY DEGREES: A STEP BY STEP GUIDE 16-19



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Key Subject pointers

Grades Needed To get offers for Biology courses will need to achieve At least AAA or AAB or equivalent for the top universities although you will find lower offers. A*AA will be asked for at some universities including Oxford with A*A*A at Cambridge.

Career Prospects If you want some re-assurance on this and to find out about the range of occupations Biology graduates go into in a typical year go to this link:

http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/assets/assets/documents/WDGD_Sept_2013.pdf

Video Profiles Go to this link to listen to students talking about Biology at university:

http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=biology%20at%20university&sm=12

HE Course Profile

<http://university.which.co.uk/subjects/biology>

Step by Step Application Guidance

In Year 11



A Level Choices Think carefully about your A level choices in the Sixth Form. The Russell Group (most of the leading universities) advice on A level choices for Biology is as follows:

ESSENTIAL Biology, usually Chemistry. A few universities specify two sciences.

USEFUL Mathematics or Physics, Computing/Computer Science.

Look at the Russell Group website which has some more very good advice on A level choices:

<https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/>

What you Need to Start Doing as Early as You Can

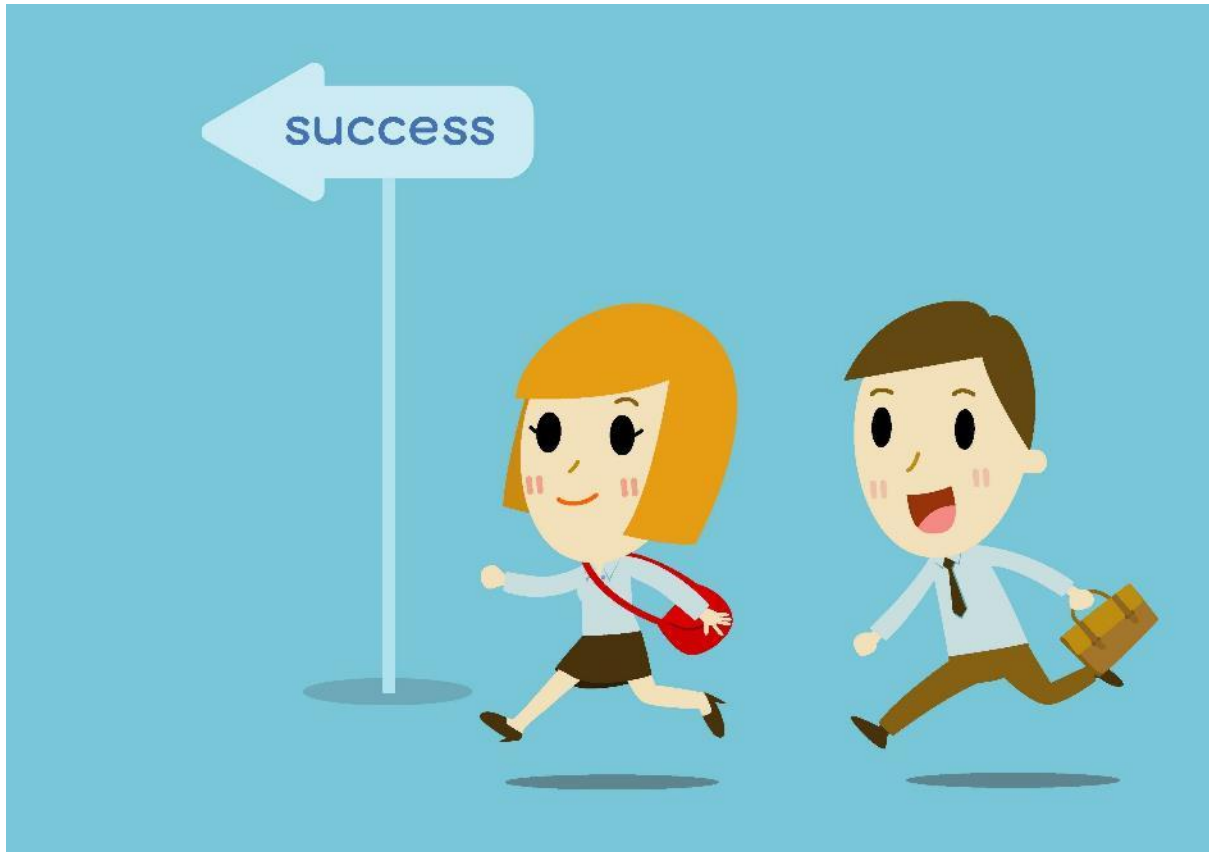
At the end of Year 12 and beginning of Year 13 you will be required to write an A4 length Personal Statement to accompany your university application. Find out more about the Personal Statement here:

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/when-apply/writing-personal-statement>

Make sure that when you write your UCAS Personal Statement that you have something relevant and interesting to write about. There are suggestions for activities you should start and websites you should visit as early in Year 12 as

you can towards the end of this guide. Use them to enrich your knowledge of your chosen course and to get involved in what universities call super-curricular activities.

Early in Year 12



Begin to Gather Key Information Visit www.ucas.com and begin to gather information about the sort of grades you will need to get to go to particular universities that attract you.

Early in Year 12:

Work experience of actual jobs is not essential for Biology but any experience you can get relevant to your A level course is useful and will strengthen your application. You could organise placements at a Natural history museum, in wildlife conservation, in a research lab in a university or industrial setting, in a clinical lab in a hospital, a zoo, a vet practice or a school. This website offers some very good advice:

<https://www.societyofbiology.org/careers-and-cpd/careers/work-experience>

From January of Year 12:



Open Days Look at www.ucas.com from January in Year 12 as the Open Days often go live from this point. You can secure the most favourable dates e.g. weekend dates so that you don't miss lessons (missing lessons means its harder to get the grades).

<http://www.opendays.com/> is a very useful website which provides an open days calendar as well as advice on choosing your visits.

What Will Get Me Ahead of the Game?

Plan Open Days Early Don't leave your open days planning till May or June in Year 12, the best dates may have been and gone.

Clear Aims Make sure that you have some clear aims and key questions before you attend an open day.

Record Keep a record observations and insights in a journal/diary as well as questions you might want to ask at the time or at interview.

Virtual Open Days Some medical schools, Warwick for example, also have virtual open days on their website. This does not mean you should not go on the actual open day.

Early June in Year 12



UCAS APPLY OPENS

UCAS Apply system becomes available online.

July to September in Year 12: The Personal Statement

HOW DO YOU WRITE A
UNIQUE PERSONAL STATEMENT?



Start Early Make sure that when you write your UCAS Personal Statement early in Year 13 that you have something relevant and interesting to write about by this time in your A level career. See enrichment activities below. At least 75% of your statement should be about Biology related issues

Check the course requirements and selection criteria: This will give you a good idea of what is being looked for

Check the course details: many students do not do this and make false assumptions about what they will study on the courses they have chosen

Avoid Clichés Don't begin your personal statement with clichés. Ask yourself whether this is something anybody could have written. If so write something original.

Do Not List It is better to write about fewer things but in more depth

Area of Interest You may want to write about a particular area of interest in Biology. Make sure you have something to say about if asked at interview.

Writing about your Work Experience It is important to say what you learnt from your work experience and to write about the insights which were gained. For some good advice on how to do this go to:

<http://university.which.co.uk/advice/personal-statements-how-to-make-your-work-experience-really-count>

Personal Statement Examples The Student Room website has useful advice on and examples of personal statements for Biology:

[http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Category:Biological Personal Statements](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Category:Biological_Sciences_Natural_Sciences)

UCAS Oxbridge Deadline If you are applying to Oxford or Cambridge for Biological Sciences/Natural Sciences make sure you have finished your application well before the 15 October deadline for submitting Oxbridge applications so that your advisers can check it and write a reference.

October to March in Year 13: The Interview



Most Do Not Interview Although Oxford and Cambridge will interview for Biological Sciences/Natural Sciences, many universities including some of the top ones like Durham and Nottingham do not. If there are no interviews your Personal Statement becomes even more important because this is all that the university will see of you.

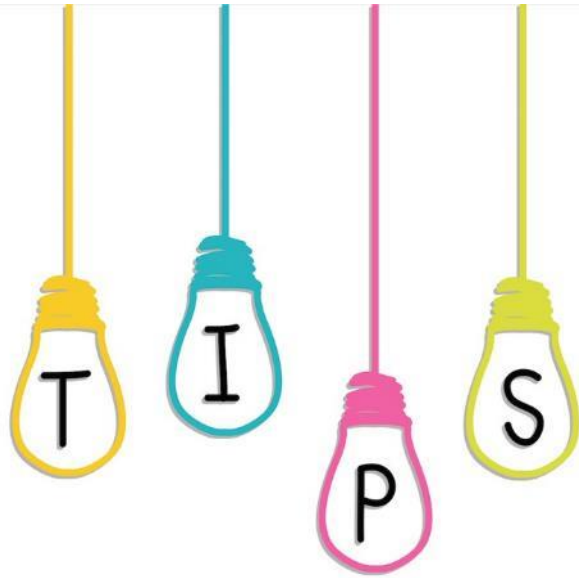
Oxford Sample Questions Oxford University have some sample questions with suggested approaches at:

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/guide/interviews>

- **Cambridge Interview Questions** You will find some examples at this link:

<http://www.cambridgeinterviewquestions.com/questions/sciences/natural-sciences/>

What should I be doing: Subject enrichment activities in Year 12 and beyond



- Read more about the topics on your course and other biology topics and issues that you have not yet studied
- Go on a Biology A level Day at the Natural History Museum in London
- Consider doing an EPQ into an area of the subject that interests you
- Enter the Biology Olympiad:

<http://www.biology-olympiad.org.uk>

What should I be reading?



- Subscribe to the Biological Sciences Review magazine published by Philip Allan Updates and look at the back-numbers if they are in your school library
- Read New Scientist magazine and visit its website:

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

- Darwin: A Very Short Introduction by Jonathan Howard
- The Animal Kingdom: A Very Short Introduction by Peter Holland

- The Incredible Unlikelihood of Being, Alice Roberts.
- The Epigenetics Revolution, Nessa Carey.
- Bad Science, Ben Goldacre.
- The Botany of Desire, Michael Pollan.
- Almost Like A Whale, Steve Jones.
- Y: The Descent of Men, Steve Jones:
- Almost Like a Whale: The 'Origin of Species' Updated, Steve Jones
- Blood Work: A Tale of Medicine and Murder in the Scientific Revolution.
- Seed to Seed, Nicholas Harberd.
- Life Ascending, Nick Lane.
- Genome, Matt Ridley.
- The Energy of Life, Guy Brown.
- The Selfish Gene, Richard Dawkins
- The Blind Watchmaker, Richard Dawkins



Which websites will be useful?



- *Biology Mad*: A very useful website with biology resources and dozens of links to useful Biology websites:
<http://www.biologymad.com/>
- *Biology Guide*
<http://www.biologyguide.net/>
- *BBC Science and Nature* website:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/science>
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p013mr15>
- *Nature* magazine website:
<http://www.nature.com/nature/index.html>
- BioDigital Human™ is an excellent virtual 3D body that brings to life thousands of medically accurate anatomy objects and health conditions in an interactive Web-based platform.
<https://www.biodigitalhuman.com/home/>
- *New Scientist* Articles on the latest science and technology news, reports, developments and research:
<http://www.newscientist.com/>

- Cellsalive!_
<http://www.cellsalive.com/>
- Centre of the Cell:
<http://www.centreofthecell.org/>
- Biology Online:_
<http://www.biology-online.org/>
- *ECSITE-UK* - Represents over 80 science centres and discovery centres in the UK.
<http://www.ecsite.eu/members/directory/association-science-and-discovery-centres>
- *BioEthics Education Project (BEEP)* Deals with ethical dilemmas that arise out of modern applications of Biology: genetic technology, reproductive issues, cloning, environmental issue etc Content is linked to exam syllabus specifications.
<http://www.beep.ac.uk/content/index.php>
- *Natural History Museum* website especially the Nature Plus archive.
<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/>

