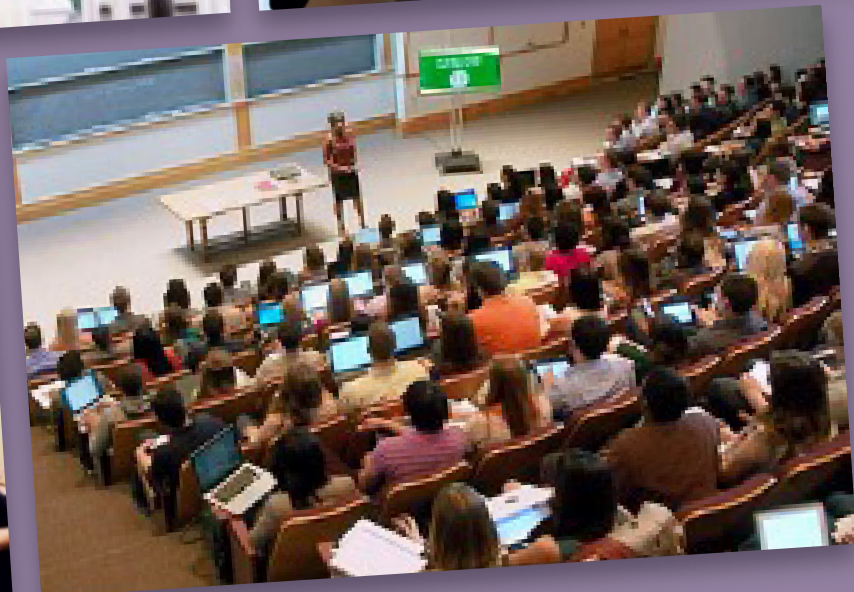




# WADDESDON SIXTH FORM



Parent/Carer Guide  
**POST 18 APPLICATIONS** 2026/2027

Dear Year 12 Parents/Carers,

We have put together resources in this booklet which we know that families have found very useful in the past to support with exploring post 18 options and applications.

We know that students are in different situations; some students have a firm view of what they want to do after Year 13, others are weighing up options, and a number still aren't yet sure of their goals, which is perfectly normal.

We understand that students can find the prospect of their post 18 options exciting as well as daunting and thus support and encouragement from school and home is vital in helping students to make informed and realistic decisions about their futures.

Students have recently heard presentations in school about university, degree/higher apprenticeships and gap years. All students have access to personal Unifrog accounts, an excellent careers platform to support them with research, up-to-date labour market information, and writing Personal Statements among other things. We have posted further resources on ClassCharts to enable them to complete guided research into their preferred options. This term, we will be delivering sessions on Personal Statements and Student Finance as well as workshops on registering for UCAS, Oxbridge and CV writing/LinkedIn profiles for apprenticeships/employment.

Mrs Bridges, our Careers Advisor, is available for careers appointments during Study Periods throughout Sixth Form, in her office in the Sixth Form Building.

We hope you find this booklet useful in guiding you through the post 18 options and applications process as a family as well as the support available at Waddesdon.

If you have any further questions or require more information, please do not hesitate to contact us at school. We are all here to help.

Yours sincerely,

Ms McIver  
Head of Sixth Form

Miss Aldridge  
Head of Year 12

Mrs Bridges  
Careers Advisor

Mrs Hay  
Student Support Officer

## Possible Post 18 Pathways with A level or Equivalent Qualifications

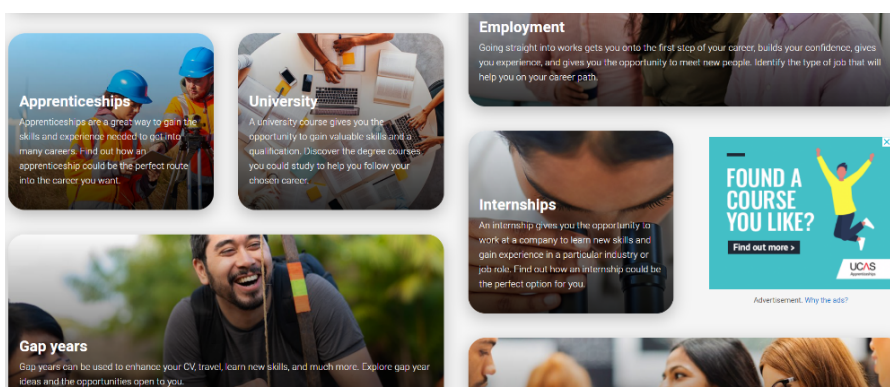
Once students have completed their A levels, there are several main pathways open to them:

1) **University/College** -  
pages 4 & 5

2) Degree or Higher  
**Apprenticeship** -  
page 6

3) **Employment** - page 7

4) **Gap Year** - page 8



A well written **Personal Statement** is vital for successful post 18 applications, be it to use to apply to university or to form the basis of a letter of application. There is advice for how to support at home with this on pages 9 to 11.

There are some excellent websites from which students can do their initial research to find out what pathways are open to whatever career or direction they have in mind:

<https://www.ucas.com/what-are-my-options>

<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>

# unifrog

**If students aren't sure what they want to do yet,** completing an online assessment of their interests and skills can be a useful starting point, which then generates some careers ideas. The school subscribes to 'Unifrog', which can be accessed here:

<https://www.unifrog.org/>

If students have a particular career in mind, sometimes university is the only route for entry, although with apprenticeships growing nationally, this is an ever-changing picture. However, for some careers, for example, in business, students may want to apply to university to read for a business degree and apply to a degree/higher apprenticeship or School Leaver Programme in a company to earn while they learn. For other careers, for example, accountancy or engineering, again, it might be appropriate to apply to read for a university degree, as well as applying for a higher or degree apprenticeship.

If students are unsure about what they want to do in the future, it is advisable for students to take a Gap Year to think through their options and gain some work experience. This is becoming a more common option now, with the rise in university tuition fees. If a student is thinking about going straight into employment, they should check what opportunities there are for training and progression within the company.

## 1) University/College

Most students will decide to continue their education by applying to university (higher education) or college (further education), choosing courses stemming from their interests or for qualifications required for a particular career path. Students complete their applications through the UCAS system, where they enter their personal, academic and course details as well as their Personal Statement. The school also completes an academic reference for each student, outlining their suitability for higher/further education. To apply for UK Performing Arts Conservatoires, students complete their applications through UCAS Conservatoires. For certain college courses, for example, Foundation Art, students need to apply to the individual institutions. Students also need to apply to Student Finance England to ensure they have sufficient funds for starting their courses the following September.

For an introductory explanation about the benefits of university, please watch this:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmu-3bh\\_NLk&t=40s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmu-3bh_NLk&t=40s)

For advice on how to choose a degree course, please watch this:

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/how-choose-right-undergraduate-course-you>

### Research:

The best place to start researching universities and their entry requirements is by completing a Course Search on the UCAS website: <https://digital.ucas.com/search>. The entire of the application process is explained here and there is a good section for parents at <https://www.ucas.com/discover/advice-for-parents-guardians-and-carers>

You can then go to individual university websites for further information about the course, the university, teaching, accommodation and so on. It is a good idea to go on open days once your son/daughter has narrowed down their choices: <https://www.ucas.com/applying/before-you-apply/what-and-where-to-study/university-open-days/preparing-for-a-university-open-day>. A full list of university open days can be found at: [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com)

Students can apply to a maximum of five degree courses. We would recommend they select 3 based on their predicted grades (including perhaps one aspiration choice) and 2 which are a grade/2 grades lower as insurance choices.

Certain courses also require students to sit admissions tests which can be organised through the school's exam office: [www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/entry-requirements/admissions-tests](http://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/entry-requirements/admissions-tests)

If students are interested in applying to Oxbridge, the following is a useful starting point:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying/guide-for-applicants>

### Student Finance:

Students also need to research Student Finance, university tuition fees and loans to ensure they are aware of the financial implications of going to university. Lots of information and the Student Finance application form can be found at:

<https://www.ucas.com/student-finance-england/student-finance-guidance-parents-and-partners>. There are also lots of bursaries and scholarships available at:

<https://www.blackbullion.com/> which is a free website to sign up to.

We highly recommend the resources from Martin Lewis found here:

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-england-plan-5/>



## UCAS Application Stages and Deadlines

**Summer Term:** building on presentations from experts in Extension Studies earlier in the year, students will complete research, undertake super-curricular activities and start drafting their Personal Statements. Explanation of Predicted Grades delivered in assembly. They also have a talk on Student Finance.

**Before the summer holidays 2026:** first draft of Personal Statement handed in and registration for UCAS

**September-October 2026:**

- Confirmation of final predicted grades in each subject
- Registration for Admissions Tests if needed

**September to December 2026:** one to one support at school for the re-drafting and refining of Personal Statements; Admissions Tests if needed; interview workshops

**15<sup>th</sup> October 2026:** UCAS deadline for Oxbridge, Vet, Medicine and Dentistry courses as well as some Music Conservatoire courses

**Mid December 2026: internal school deadline for the sending off UCAS applications**

**14<sup>th</sup> January 2027:** Official UCAS deadline for most courses

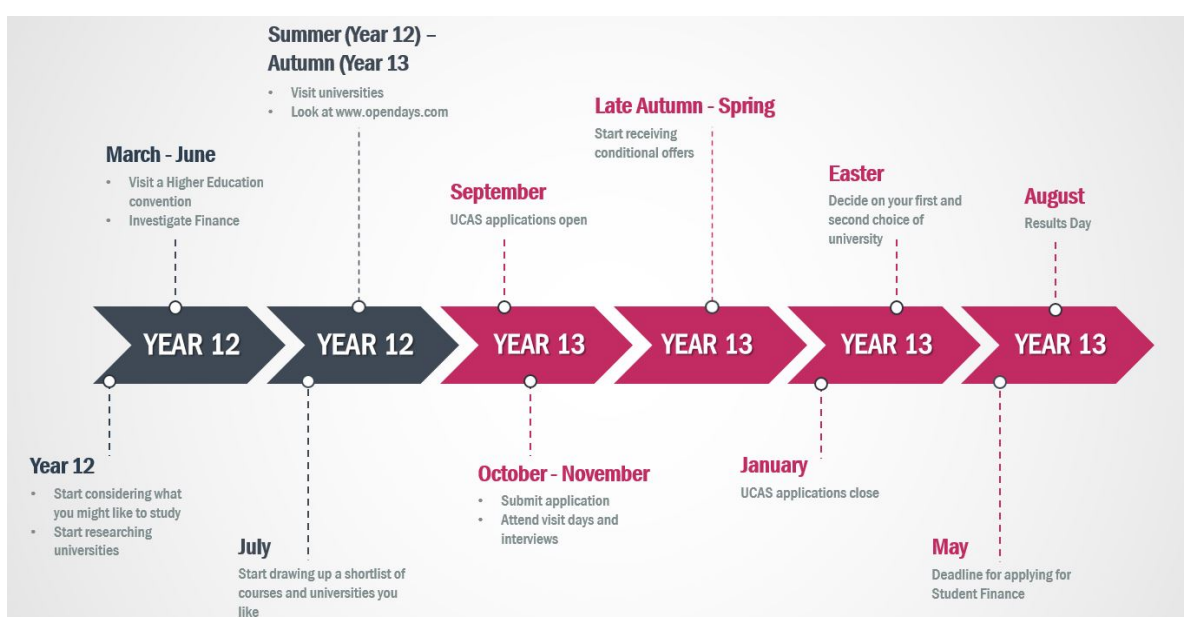
**February 2027:** Applying for Student Finance presentation in assembly

**From sending off the application to May 2027:** Students receive offers and rejections through UCAS Track. Students may be invited to interview – assembly and one-to-one school support is available

**By the beginning of May/June 2027:** Students need to decide on their Firm and Insurance Offers and input their decision onto UCAS Track; students may also start applying for accommodation

**May 2027:** Deadline for Student Finance, if students want their fees/loans/grants for the start of their courses in the Autumn

**August 2027:** A level Results and confirmation of places through UCAS Hub Track account. UCAS Clearing (if a student does better than expected or misses the grades for their offers so does not hold a university place)



## 2) Higher or Degree Apprenticeships

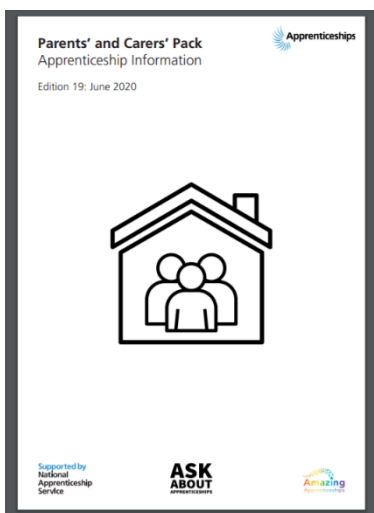
Students can also apply for employment-based training and qualifications. Many organisations and businesses now offer degree or higher apprenticeships where apprentices are taken on as employees, earning a wage and working alongside experienced staff to gain job-specific skills. During this time, apprentices receive training to work towards nationally recognised qualifications, usually on a day release basis at a local college or university; employers pay for apprentices to complete Foundation or Undergraduate Degrees.

Please watch this introduction from top recruiters delivered by the Financial Times:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDnb9wWhPqE>



Students can apply for apprenticeships by registering online with the government's apprenticeship website. Well-known companies, such as BMW, Nielsen and the National Grid, give full details of their apprenticeships on their websites and many local companies also have openings which they advertise in the local press. Students can also take the initiative and approach employers with their CVs. With A level qualifications, students should apply for Higher or Degree Apprenticeships over Advanced Apprenticeships which normally require GCSEs for entry.



The main apprenticeships website is: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>. Students can search and apply there.

There are useful parents' sections at:

<https://amazingapprenticeships.com/parents/> or <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/parents/their-career>.



Full details about these opportunities are available on individual company websites. Some examples are included below:

KPMG:

<https://www.kpmgcareers.co.uk/school-leavers>

Civil Service: <https://www.civil-service-careers.gov.uk/apprenticeships/>

**VACANCY SNAPSHOT**

Click on the logos below to see a snapshot of apprenticeship vacancies coming up soon

<input type="text" value="SORT EMPLOYERS"/> <input type="text" value="Employer Name"/> <input type="submit" value=""/>					
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### 3) Employment

Entering straight into employment is another option for students. Students can research employment opportunities by looking at local companies or large organisations that have several locations around the country. The following list shows the different sectors that offer employment straight after A levels:

- Banking, insurance and financial services
- Large retailers and supermarkets
- Health, scientific and technical careers
- Careers in the emergency and uniformed services
- Creative and media
- Information technology
- Construction and the built environment
- Engineering
- Public sector
- Hospitality, travel and leisure
- Care

Before embarking on a job finding mission, students need to think about the skills and knowledge that they can gain from this route. Do they offer training to match their skill set and are there opportunities to become promoted and/or work in other departments?

Is the student currently working somewhere part-time and now has the opportunity to work full-time? Students can speak to their Manager to find out what the possibilities are to become a full-time, permanent member of staff.

Students can also research company websites, local and national newspapers and general employment websites to find the vacancies that are available. An idea of the local labour market will also help to identify the main companies in the area.

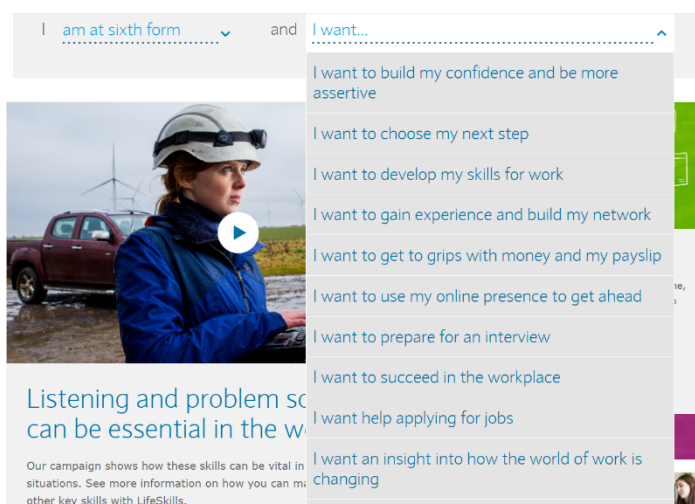
Finally, students must not be shy! As a family, if you have contacts with a company, the student can be pro-active and approach the company directly.

Explore for <https://uk.indeed.com/> general employment opportunities and local labour market information. Also explore: <https://www.careerpilot.org.uk/job-sectors>

Companies looking for A level students often attend recruitment fairs in local areas. Local newspapers and company websites will provide the information regarding these events. Any opportunities we are sent as a school will be advertised in assembly.

Some good websites for writing a CV can be found at: <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/cv-sections> or <https://www.reed.co.uk/career-advice/cv-templates-and-tips/>. Interview technique tips can be found at: <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/interview-advice>.

The Barclays Life Skills Hub has some excellent resources for students and families: <https://barclayslifefskills.com/families/>



The screenshot shows a user interface for career advice. At the top, there is a dropdown menu with the text 'I am at sixth form' and another dropdown with 'I want...'. Below these are several options for career goals, such as 'I want to build my confidence and be more assertive', 'I want to choose my next step', 'I want to develop my skills for work', 'I want to gain experience and build my network', 'I want to get to grips with money and my payslip', 'I want to use my online presence to get ahead', 'I want to prepare for an interview', 'I want to succeed in the workplace', 'I want help applying for jobs', and 'I want an insight into how the world of work is changing'. On the left side of the interface, there is a video player showing a woman in a blue jacket and white hard hat, with a play button in the center. Below the video, there is text that reads 'Listening and problem solving can be essential in the workplace' and 'Our campaign shows how these skills can be vital in various situations. See more information on how you can master other key skills with LifeSkills.'

#### 4) GAP Year

Some students decide to take a GAP Year to give themselves an opportunity to develop their experiences before continuing their education or entering employment and to give themselves more time to consider their future.

If a student decides to take a GAP Year before university, there are two options:

- 1) Deferred entry: the UCAS application is completed during Year 13 for a start after the GAP Year
- 2) A UCAS application completed after the student has their A level results during the GAP Year with support from school. Students need to phone school to make an appointment.

Most students carefully plan their GAP Year to make the most of it, completing a mixture of work experience, voluntary work, employment and foreign projects/travel to broaden their horizons. Some students complete 'A Year in Industry' to give them paid experience of the workplace before they return to their studies. What is most important is that students plan their year carefully as well as consider their budgeting to get the most from it.

To begin planning their GAP Years, there is useful information here:

<https://www.ucas.com/discover/gap-years>

Other useful websites include:

[www.yearoutgroup.org](http://www.yearoutgroup.org)

<https://www.gvi.co.uk/>

Camp America: <https://www.campamerica.co.uk/>

International Citizenship Service (like NCS and very cost effective):

<https://volunteers.org/>

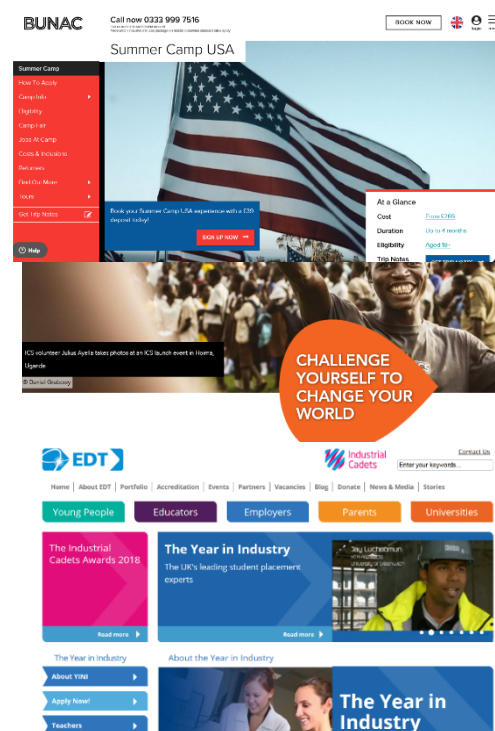
Volunteering opportunities: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/gap-year-travel/gap-year-100-companydirectoryvolunteering/>

Year in Industry: [www.etrust.org.uk/the-year-in-industry](http://www.etrust.org.uk/the-year-in-industry)

Ski season: <https://www.oysterworldwide.com/projects/ski-season/>

Working abroad: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/gap-year-travel/gap-year-100-companydirectoryworkingabroad/>

Project Trust: <https://projecttrust.org.uk/>



As you will see, there are a lot of Gap Year companies; we recommend using long standing organisations and completing careful research into the company before signing up.

**Please note: All information in this booklet was correct at time of printing. Entry requirements and information about post 18 options changes frequently. Although we recommend the websites above, we cannot guarantee every aspect of their content is accurate.**

## Supporting with a Personal Statement at home

Students can find writing their Personal Statements difficult because they do not like writing about themselves and their skills and talents. They also tend to write about all the things they have done without making their experiences relevant to the course they are applying for. Key is ensuring at least 70-80% of the Personal Statement demonstrates a keen interest for the course/role they are applying for and the remaining 20-30% focuses on their extra-curricular activities and other interests.

**If your son/daughter is having trouble getting started, brainstorming answers to the following questions can begin to generate ideas:**

- Why are you enthusiastic about the course/role/job you are applying for?
- What triggered your interest? What is the background to your interest?
- Have you completed any relevant work/voluntary experience in the area and what did you learn from it?
- What particular interests have you from your A level studies and how have these helped you to decide on your course?
- What evidence of wider reading, learning or experience beyond the syllabus can you produce?
- What super/extra-curricular activities are you involved in?
- How else do you contribute to your school/local community?
- What other achievements/successes have you had?
- What skills have all of these helped you to develop?

**Key to reinforce with your son/daughter is:**

- ENTHUSIASM for the course/role/job!
- Don't just tell – SHOW/DEMONSTRATE/GIVE EXAMPLES
- Keep to the word limit (4000 characters including spaces) and do not plagiarise

**Three part structure:**

<b>Why do you want to study this course or subject?</b>
<b>How have your qualifications or studies helped you prepare for this course or subject?</b>
<b>What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?</b>

**For more information, see lots of examples on Unifrog or :**

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement/how-write-personal-statement>

## Overview of Careers Support in School

<b>YEAR 12</b>	
Autumn Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to all post-18 pathways, labour market information and initial advice</li> <li>• Introduction to Unifrog (our school's careers platform)</li> <li>• Whole year group visit to Northampton University for the UK University and Apprenticeship Tour.</li> </ul>
Spring Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University Presentation – benefits of a university education and advice for choosing your degree course</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation about Degree Apprenticeships – benefits of a degree apprenticeship, the opportunities available and how to apply</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gap Year presentation – advantages of taking a Gap Year and an introduction to the many opportunities on offer</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities advertised in assembly and on ClassCharts (virtual and in person)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Experience Launch</li> <li>• Guided independent research through recommended websites</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waddesdon CE School Careers Fair – with many universities, apprenticeship providers, local companies and gap year organisations in attendance</li> </ul>
May half term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Super-Curricular Challenge Reminder – activities which make applications shine</li> </ul>
Summer Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation on Personal Statements, with time to start drafting</li> <li>• Presentation on Student Finance</li> <li>• Workshop to register for UCAS and start applications (no decisions need to be made about courses or universities at this point)</li> <li>• Oxbridge workshop</li> <li>• LinkedIn Profile Form Time</li> <li>• Workshop on CV writing for apprenticeship and employment applications</li> <li>• Work Experience – two days in term time</li> </ul>
End of Year 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students submit first draft of Personal Statement via Unifrog</li> <li>• Employability Awards presentations</li> </ul>
<b>YEAR 13</b>	
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on personal statement from the Sixth Form Team via Unifrog</li> </ul>
Early October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirmation of predicted grades</li> </ul>
Autumn Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One to one support with personal statements (drafting and redrafting)</li> </ul>
October to December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One to one support with checking of application forms and submission to UCAS</li> </ul>
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation on how to make the best impression at interview with one-to-one support as necessary</li> </ul>
January to April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops on Higher/ Degree Apprenticeships and Gap Years with one-to-one support on advice and applications; Gap Year workshop</li> <li>• Lunchtime workshops with local employers keen to recruit Waddesdon students: Everitt Kerr Accountancy; Richardsons' Accountancy; Nielsen; Waddesdon Manor/Estate; ITS Construction; other companies who get in touch</li> <li>• Assemblies and form times about independent living and financial wellbeing</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Finance Presentation in assembly</li> <li>• Waddesdon CE School Careers Fair</li> </ul>
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assembly on Firm and Insurance choices with advice on Adjustment and Clearing</li> </ul>
August Results' Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-to-one clinics to support students with advice and options</li> </ul>
Gap Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued support for students with applications as needed</li> </ul>

**Mrs Bridges, our Careers Advisor, is available for appointments during Study Periods throughout Sixth Form, in her office upstairs in the Sixth Form Building. Parents/Carers are welcome to attend too.**