



# African Leadership Academy

Developing the next generation of African leaders

**Campus Address**  
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## APPLYING TO THE UK

The United Kingdom (UK) is comprised of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Universities in all four of these lands are subject to the same government regulations and processes, but the system of education in Scotland is different from that in the other parts of the UK. Thus the application process is consistent throughout Great Britain, but what you experience as a student would be different, depending on whether you enrol in Scotland or elsewhere in the UK. Most degrees in the UK can be completed in three years, whereas in Scotland, the usual length is four years.

### What to Study?

If you are applying in the UK, you are required to indicate your course of study at the time you apply. Unlike the US, where students can apply without having decided about their major, there is no such thing as undecided at UK universities. If you like the idea of studying in the UK, you must be prepared to launch into a quite specific course of study, and to stay with it for three years until you complete your degree. The word course is used to describe the subject of study, including all the specific classes that a student will take over the three or four years of enrolment. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the course of study is usually quite specific - for example, Psychology at the University of Durham, or a joint course such as Business Management with French at Queen Mary University. Once your studies begin, all courses relate to that subject area, or two subject areas in a joint degree. If you change your mind about your course, you have to reapply to a different course, and unless its a closely related field, you would have to begin your degree over from the beginning. For this reason, students who are not certain of their interests are not a good match for studying in the UK.

### Researching Courses and Universities

The UCAS (Colleges and Universities Admissions Service) website is the best place to begin the research process. African Leadership Academy is registered with UCAS and our school code is: **S45905**.

Go to the UCAS website at [www.ucas.ac.uk](http://www.ucas.ac.uk) and click on Course Search. You can then search by course or by university. As you find courses of interest, you will notice the letters EP listed after many course titles. These initials indicate the university has registered an entry profile on the website, and by clicking on the course title, you will be able to view the profile. Entry profiles contain information about why one would study a course, what are the key skills and qualities sought in applicants (which is important as you write your personal statement!), where to obtain more information, what academic qualifications are needed, and a great deal of information about the course itself. You will be able to see exactly what classes you will be required to take during each year of the course, which will help you decide if this subject is realistic for you.

Entry profiles are a great place to start the research process. Once youve decided on a course, you should consult Unistats, a website that allows you to compare a particular course for example, advertising, at all universities in the UK that offer it. You will find data there about the number of A-Level points achieved by the average admitted student, which is a rough way of determining selectivity. You also have access to student satisfaction data, based on a survey of students in their



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final year of the course. Finally, Unistats also report the percentage of graduates who are employed or enrolled in post-graduate degree courses within six months of graduation. There are numerous other resources available for investigating courses. The Higher Education League Tables, published by the major British newspapers such as *The Times* and *The Guardian* are sometimes helpful but should not be used as your sole form of research.

## Application Process

UCAS serves as the central clearinghouse for university applications in the UK. Applicants fill out a single online form, a reference is added, and once the form is submitted, UCAS forwards the application to the universities that the student has indicated. Each university then makes a decision about the application, forwards that information to UCAS, and it is then posted in the student's UCAS account. The UCAS application limits you to a maximum of five courses, or four choices in clinical areas such as medicine or dentistry. These course choices could be at five different universities, or two courses could be chosen at the same university (e.g., one course called Psychology and another called Social Psychology at University of Kent would make up two course choices).

## Starting the Application

Each year, the counselor who is designated the UK Application Facilitator will provide updated and detailed instructions about how to complete the UCAS application correctly. To make the process go as smooth as possible, it is important that you register and apply as an ALA student. Please note that completed applications cannot be submitted to UCAS through the online system until mid September 2011. **If you register on UCAS to get your username and password for Entry in 2012, ALAs buzzword is, Peacock.**

Once you have set up an account, you can begin completing the UCAS form. It requests demographic information, a list of courses to which you are applying, a report of completed and anticipated examinations (including SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests, and A Level exams), and a one page personal statement which is described below.

After submission, your counselor checks and approves the data you entered and adds the reference letter, which will be written by your counselor with input from teachers you have had in subjects related to your intended field of study. Your counselor then submits the form to UCAS, which forwards it to your chosen universities. An admissions tutor determines whether your background, ability, and examination scores suggest success in your intended course of study.

Since the UCAS application deadline is January 15, your completed application must be submitted online no later than December 1, so the reference can be added and the form submitted before school closes for the December holiday. Any application received after January 15, is considered a late application and will be processed only after all other applications have been considered. ALA will enforce a December 1 deadline to ensure that you have your best chance of admission.



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There are earlier deadlines for specific universities and courses. Students applying to Oxford or Cambridge must submit the UCAS form plus a supplemental paper application by mid-September. Unfortunately admission interviews will not be offered in South Africa.

If you think you might apply to Oxford or Cambridge, you *must* discuss this with your counselor as soon as possible we can start submitting specific information required by those two institutions. Students applying for medical, dental, or veterinary courses must submit applications to their counselor by October 1, in order for the form to reach UCAS by the October 15 deadline. Please note that interviews are almost always required for these clinical courses.

## Personal Statement

Your personal statement will be different from the essay you submit to US colleges and universities. Your personal statement is your chance to make a convincing case for your admission to study a particular subject. The personal statement can be no longer than 47 lines or 4000 characters, including spaces, and should focus on why you have chosen to study the courses you have listed, and what interests you about your subject. Details about what you have studied, read, or experienced in relation to your course will help the admissions tutors assess your suitability for admission. This is not a place to talk about all your extracurricular activities, but rather to discuss how any particular activity might have helped to prepare you to study your subject. Readers will be carefully considering your level of motivation to study your chosen course.

UCAS is very serious about detecting plagiarized personal statements. Each incoming personal statement is checked against a library of personal statements from previously submitted applications and sample statements on websites and in paper publications. After your application is processed, your personal statement will also become part of the library of statements. Any statements showing a potential level of similarity of 10% or greater will be reviewed closely. Readers will be carefully considering your level of motivation to study your chosen course.

## Reference

Since you apply for a particular course of study at UK universities, the UCAS reference is very different from a recommendation letter to a US university. The reference should specifically concentrate on your suitability for the proposed course of study, and will include predicted A-Level exam results as reported by your teachers. Do not ask your teachers to report a higher grade because your offer will reflect that higher prediction and you will then have to achieve that score or lose your chance to attend that university.

A teacher in your area of intended study will write your UCAS reference, and will include content or quotations from one or more relevant teachers. The document must discuss how you are suited to study the course for which you are applying. In order to do that well, your counselor and teachers will need information from you about this. You will receive a counselor and teacher data form to fill out at the beginning of your second year which will help your teachers through the process.



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## UK entrance tests

Depending on your choice of major/course, you will be required to take entrance exams. For example, students may be required to take the TSA, the LNAT, the BMAT, etc. before submitting their application. In addition, individual universities may require you to take further exams (and or have an interview) after your application has been submitted. Please note that these university-specific exams/interviews may be offered only on the university's campus! The family will be responsible for any exam fees and/or cost of travel to sit further exams in the UK.

*Please note that registration deadlines for some UK entrance exams fall during the ALA term break. For example, the UK-CAT will require that you register before you return to ALA campus in September. Please carefully review your options and any relevant requirements/deadlines so that you do not miss any important dates!*

## After Applying

After your application has been reviewed, you will be informed of your admission decisions through a section of the UCAS website called Track at [www.ucas.com/students/track/](http://www.ucas.com/students/track/). Instead of an outright acceptance, UK universities give offers of admission which are usually contingent upon meeting specific conditions. A typical offer requires certain A-Level or SAT Reasoning and Subject Test scores. The more popular the course of study, the higher examination scores needed. A straight denial occurs if you do not complete the specifically required exams or if your exam scores to date are weak. On the other hand, a particularly well-qualified student may receive an unconditional offer, which is an outright offer of admission. Some universities will make an offer contingent upon exam scores in particular subjects. For example, if you apply for a chemistry course, you would need to be taking A-Level Chemistry and Math and earn particular scores on both exams.

Each time a UK university makes a decision on one of your applications, UCAS will post the offer in your UCAS Track account, including all the details. You will also eventually receive a formal offer in the mail. Because of the way UK admissions decisions are made, the ALA transcript is of less importance than exam scores. Once you've been assigned a UCAS number, if you wish, you can have your transcripts sent directly to the university admission tutor, especially if you've done well. The transcript may not carry a lot of weight, but a record showing you did well in high school will never hurt. Don't respond to any offers until you get the last one. When the last decision is posted, speak with your counselor and then use your Track account to reply to your offers. You will be asked to code all of your offers (you could have as many as five) as Firm, Insurance or Decline. Choose one firm and one insurance offer; all others must be declined. Since most offers are conditional upon examination scores and you won't have received the exam results, this can be a difficult decision, so speak with your counselor.

## Once you have made a commitment to particular courses, you cannot change your mind.

If you did not receive any offers, you can participate in a process called Extra in which you can apply one at a time to additional courses until you receive an offer. Students who receive offers,



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but do not make the scores required by their firm or insurance offer can enter a process called Clearing in which they can compete for available places based on their actual A-Level scores.

## UK Timeline

**15 October 2011** - application deadline for the receipt at UCAS of applications for all medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and veterinary science courses, and for all courses at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

**1 December 2011** ALA application deadline for the receipt at UCAS of applications for all courses except those listed above with a 15 October deadline, and art and design courses with a 24 March deadline.

**24 March 2012** - application deadline for the receipt at UCAS of applications for art and design courses except those listed with a 1 December deadline.

**30 June 2012** - Last date for the receipt of all other applications for immediate consideration. Those received after this date will be held for Clearing.

**International applicants** - Many universities and colleges will consider your application as long as it is received at UCAS by 30 June 2012. This does not apply to applications for the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, courses in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or veterinary science. For all of these, applicants must apply by 15 October 2011. Universities and colleges do not guarantee to consider applications they receive after 15 January 2012 and some popular courses may not have vacancies after that date. You will need to check with individual universities and colleges which is why it will be important to apply early!