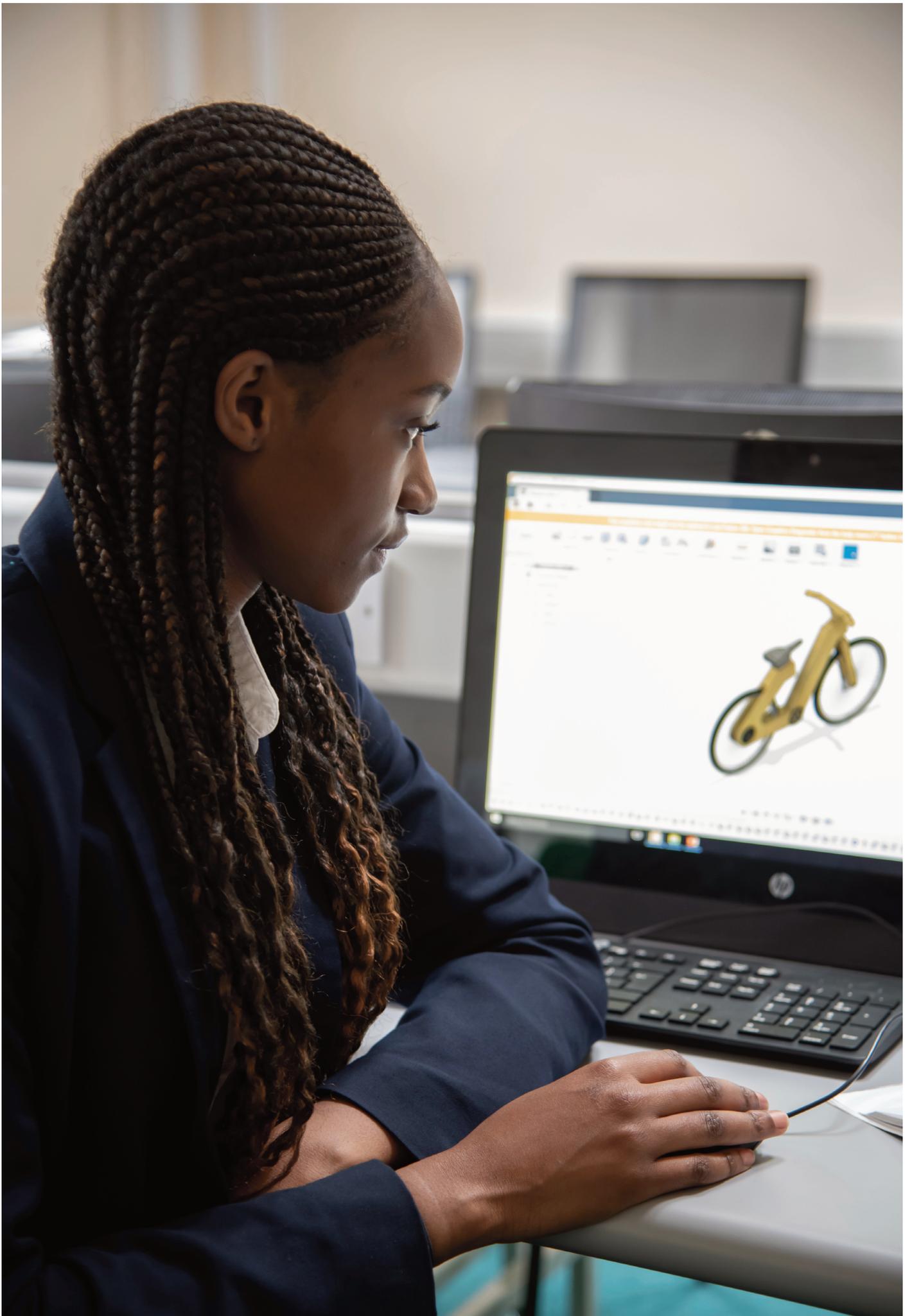




Aldenham
founded 1597

The Aldenham Approach to University Applications 2021 entry





The Aldenham Approach to University Applications

At Aldenham, we are dedicated to ensuring that all students take great care in selecting universities and courses. These are decisions that will affect the rest of their lives and therefore great care and attention is needed to get these all-important decisions right. We have outlined below the 'Aldenham Approach' to university applications. Whilst this advice is specifically geared towards those applying to UK universities through UCAS, much of it is also pertinent for those applying to overseas institutions.

Anyone considering applying to study abroad must make sure they have spoken to Mrs Evagora or Mr Fenn.

Predicted grades

Grade predictions are made by the Heads of Department. These grades have to be based on evidence from:

- the Year 12 Predicted Grade exams in April;
- regular tests and assignments throughout the A Level courses; and
- GCSE grades.

The door will remain ajar for students to improve upon their predicted grades. Departments will give students further opportunities with internal exams/tests at the start of Year 13. This also ensures that the summer holidays are productive with students revising their Year 12 work for their linear A Levels.

Choices

Students are encouraged to apply for appropriate courses and to apply to a sensible range of universities for their **five** choices.

Students are generally encouraged to apply to up to two 'aspirational' choices that are slightly above their predicted grades, up to three choices that are identical to their predicted grades and one that is lower. An example would be a student predicted BBB may apply to one course that requires ABB, three that require BBB and one that requires BBC. This may not always be the case and can be dependent on the academic capabilities of the student and the type of course they have chosen.

Once offers are received from the universities, students should choose a firm and insurance choice. The insurance choice serves as a 'safety net' if students do not get the grades to get into their first choice. Clearing will serve as a further safety net.

Choices must be **aspirational** and **realistic** and **the insurance choice should be lower than the first choice**.

Students should be prepared to go to their insurance choice – the selection for this needs to be as careful as their firm choice.

The five university choices are not ranked from 1 to 5 at the point of application.



Unifrog

Aldenham School supports students thoroughly in their post-18 decision making and applications. To assist with this process, Aldenham uses the Unifrog platform. This helps students:

- Research future options, such as universities in the UK and abroad, apprenticeships, employment, etc;
- Organise and record their thinking and decision making; and
- Build a record of accomplishments.

We have also set up a parent login so that you can use Unifrog as if you were a student yourself, allowing you to truly support your child. Parents can sign up at www.unifrog.org/code using the form code **ParentsAldenham**

HSU (Highly Selective Universities) Programme

The HSU programme runs from the beginning of Year 12. It is designed to challenge students intellectually, pushing them beyond the limits of their A Levels. The programme assists with the preparation of an application for a highly selective course (e.g. medicine or dentistry) or to a highly selective institution (e.g. Oxbridge or Ivy League universities). It also aims to help prepare those who will need to do an audition (e.g. for a music conservatoire or drama school), prepare a portfolio (e.g. for art college or an architecture course) or who need to sit admissions tests (e.g. SATs for American universities). Finally, the programme is open to any other students who wish to participate and display impressive academic curiosity.

Students are individually assigned subject-specific mentors with whom they meet fortnightly (at a minimum). The programme also aims to broaden students' intellectual horizons through:

- Regular mock interviews;
- Timetabled lessons to prepare for admission tests, interviews etc.;
- HSU Humanities and HSU STEM sessions as part of the Activities Programme;
- Participation in internal and external essay competitions;
- Educational visits and trips;
- Participation in the *Les Philosophes* lecture programme; and
- The delivery of lectures by students to their peers.

Anyone who is not currently part of the HSU Programme but is interested in being involved should contact the Head of the HSU Programme, Mr Hoskins.

References

Before a reference is written, Tutors and Housemasters/mistresses will discuss with students which courses they are applying for. Tutors and Housemasters/mistresses will make sure they are aware of all of the students' achievements beyond the classroom. Students should reflect at this stage on the extent to which they have taken advantage of the opportunities here at Aldenham. Students may need to 'raise their game' and increase their involvement in the coming months in order to enhance their reference and personal statement.

Subject references are written by subject specialists and the overall reference is put together by the students' Tutors and Housemasters/mistresses. The achievements of the students inside and outside School will be noted, along with their key character strengths. References are then checked not just by the School's UCAS advisors but also by the Headmaster before they are sent.

Students are also allowed to read their references before they are sent. We believe that students are in the best position to check if anything has been missed. Aldenham students are invariably pleased with their references and the way in which they have been marketed by the School.

Personal statements

The personal statement is only 47 lines long. Despite this, for students, producing their personal statement will be about 90% of their work in the UCAS process. As such, students need to put a huge amount of effort into getting it right. On average, they will write five drafts before it is judged good enough to be submitted.

To compete favourably against other applicants, students need to demonstrate passion and understanding of their chosen subject and courses. This includes an awareness of what the degree will be like, its content and assessment style. Unifrog is an excellent platform in which to research courses – the 'subjects library' section provides excellent guidance and ideas for wider reading/research.

Selling yourself on paper can be harder than selling yourself in person. It is a life skill and knowing how to do this will help our students get job interviews in the future.

Students should enlist the help of their Tutors and, more importantly, the relevant subject teachers. Their Housemaster/mistress will also be on hand to help. The School's UCAS advisors will provide the most feedback and put in a lot of time to ensure each statement is impressive. In the case of HSU applicants, guidance will also come from Mr Hoskins.

Students should complete the first draft of their personal statement over the summer holidays.

Deadlines

Those who are applying for Oxbridge or to become a dentist, vet or medic have a deadline of **15 October 2020** to complete their UCAS application. Other universities/courses have a deadline of **15 January 2021**.

The Aldenham deadline for all students is the beginning of November, so that from then onwards, they can focus on achieving the grades needed to secure a place at their first choice university.

The Summer Term and holidays

During the Summer Term of Year 12 our careers sessions are devoted to post-18 planning, covering: the UCAS application; gap year possibilities; student finance; and framing the all-important personal statement.

Students should use Unifrog to research courses, visit the UCAS website and talk to the School's UCAS advisors. Thorough research into universities and courses has to be done this term so that a final shortlist can be made during the summer.

UCAS 2020 for 2021 Entry: Key Dates

4 March 2020	Higher Education Forum at Aldenham School
15 April 2020	Year 12 Predicted Grade exams begin
29 April 2020	Year 12 Parents' Evening
April 2020 onwards	Research into possible university and course choices continues Attend open days Submit first draft of the UCAS personal statement
June 2020	UCAS application process goes live
September 2020 onwards	UCAS applications can be submitted
15 October 2020	Deadline for Oxford, Cambridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary applications N.B. This is also the date of the House Music competition
4 November 2020	University entrance exams (such as BMAT for Medicine) to be taken
6 November 2020	Aldenham deadline for UCAS applications
15 January 2021	Final UCAS deadline for applications
Spring 2021	Apply for accommodation Apply online through Student Finance England for loans/grants
May 2021	Confirm firm and insurance choices with UCAS N.B. This process is contingent on the date of receipt of offers
May - June 2021	A Level examinations
12 August 2021	A Level results published

Final decisions from UCAS institutions by end of August.

If not successful, consult UCAS advisors regarding the Clearing process.

A list of university open days is available online on the UCAS website. We recommend students visit universities which have grade requirements appropriate to their predicted grades before they apply.

A LEVEL GRADES and UCAS POINTS

GRADE	UCAS POINTS
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

After submitting the UCAS form, what happens next?

Applicants should make a careful note of their UCAS number. Any correspondence with either UCAS or an individual institution will require this UCAS number.

If an institution makes an offer it will be one of the following:

(i) **Unconditional Offer**

This may or may not be dependent on the applicant selecting this as their first choice.

(ii) **Conditional Offer (most common)**

This may be through a Grades or Points offer.

Applicants may hold **TWO** offers in the UCAS scheme:

- the first, a **Firm** acceptance, is the one they want most; and
- the other, an **Insurance** acceptance, should be a course which they would still be happy to follow (if they do not get the grades required for a Firm).

When considering whether or not to accept particular offers applicants need to bear the following points in mind:

- a points offer is easier to achieve than an offer consisting of grades;
- take careful note of which grades are required in each subject; and
- they cannot change their mind once they have made a decision.



Applicants will be notified of the date by which they must reply to offers from the different institutions.

Applicants cannot reply to any offers until they have received their last decision from UCAS. There is no mechanism for applicants to make replies until they have received a 'Statement of Decisions' letter, in which all of their offers will be summarised to them by UCAS.

If applicants hold no offers after receiving all decisions then they are eligible to enter UCAS Extra. This allows students to approach universities with vacancies one at a time. If the university is interested in the applicant, they will request the applicant's UCAS form and an offer is formalised through UCAS Extra.

The third Thursday in August is when A Level results will be available in school. **All students need to be available from this date onwards.** Successful students need to be available to confirm offers and possibly to sort out accommodation, etc. If they are unsuccessful, they will need to be on hand to participate in the Clearing process.

Student Finance

After students have chosen their courses and are waiting for their offers they must start thinking about what financial help they need and can apply for.

Many students are worried about getting into debt at a young age. While it is wise to worry about debt, student finance can be a solution.

The main types of student finance are **tuition fee and maintenance loans** (which have to be paid back), and **grants and bursaries** which do not have to be paid back.

Students can apply for a Tuition Fee Loan of up to £9,250 per annum to cover tuition fees, while Maintenance Loans and bursaries help towards living costs such as rent and bills. The amount of Maintenance Loan that students will be eligible for may depend on their household income, the type of course they are studying and where they live. The cost of living varies across universities depending on their geographical location, with London-based universities often costing more. There are several types of grants, bursaries and scholarships that students can apply for so it is worth researching it.

Repayment

From 6 April 2020, the payment threshold is calculated as below:

The repayment threshold for income-assessed loans will rise to £26,575 from 6 April 2020 to 5 April 2021.

Currently in England and Wales, the student loan is cancelled 30 years after individuals become eligible to repay.

When to apply

To ensure that students have their loans in place for the beginning of the academic year they need to meet the deadline (June 2021).

If their application is late, their money might be too. Students need to make sure they have got their applications in by the deadline so they are not left short at the start of term.

Students should apply online with their passport number and send requested evidence as quickly as possible. They should also ensure that their parents or sponsors complete their financial information to get their application completed by the relevant deadlines.

Gap Year

Many students choose to take a gap year before starting their next phase in life. The purpose of the gap year might be to take time out to consider future goals or simply to undertake an activity that the individual feels they will not have time to do later after commencing university.

It is important that the gap year is planned and well-researched in order to benefit from the experience. An effective gap year experience is something that has relevance to the individual's considered career option, or an experience which demonstrates certain traits and characteristics in an individual which universities and employers would see as beneficial.

Many students choose to volunteer abroad for an organisation. However many gap year jobs are paid.



Students taking a gap year could:

- Develop transferable skills;
- Raise cultural awareness;
- Increase confidence and independence;
- Learn a new craft;
- Increase work experience and boost CVs; and
- Improve language skills.

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

The Careers programme is delivered through the following areas:

a) Apprenticeship guidance and support

Just as all students are offered advice on how to attend universities, we feel that it is important to provide students with alternative options. Students have the opportunity to attend apprenticeship days and to receive advice from external speakers. There is more information on apprenticeships in the next section.

b) CV writing and interview preparation

All students have been provided with guidance and support on how to write a good CV and how to prepare themselves for interviews. In Year 13, students will have the opportunity to practice their interview skills during an interview workshop with external interviewers from various businesses.



c) Work experience

All Year 12 students should participate in work experience. This should be for approximately five days and students are responsible for organising this. The Head of Careers, Mrs Tekin, is available to help them make the necessary arrangements. It is recommended that this takes place during the summer holiday before they start Year 13.



Apprenticeships

Some students may decide that, instead of going to university, they are interested in starting work whilst learning skills and gaining a qualification. If this is something they are considering, then an apprenticeship could be the right option. During an apprenticeship, students study for qualifications while working and learning the skills they need for the job they are doing.

To start an apprenticeship the student must be 16 or over, eligible to work in the UK and not in full-time education. Some apprenticeships are available to those with a reasonable set of GCSE grades, whilst others are only on offer to those with A Levels. Unifrog has a superb apprenticeships module for you to explore.

How does it work?

Apprenticeship training can take between one and five years to complete, but the length of an apprenticeship depends on its level, the industry in question and the skills the apprentice already has.

Training takes place in the workplace and they will also spend some time at a local college or with another learning provider. Apprentices are taken on directly by employers and work alongside other employees.

These are real jobs (like any other non-apprenticeship job) so students have to apply to an employer and compete against other applicants. Entry requirements vary depending on the level of the apprenticeship and the nature of the job.

There are three levels of apprenticeship available. The level a student starts at would depend on their qualifications and the opportunities available in the sector they are interested in.

- Intermediate Apprenticeship (Level 2; equivalent to five good GCSE passes): provides apprentices with the skills and qualifications for their chosen career and allow entry (if desired) to an Advanced Apprenticeship. To be accepted students will need to be enthusiastic, keen to learn and have a reasonable standard of education.

- Advanced Apprenticeship (Level 3; equivalent to two A Level passes): to start this programme, some industries will require particular GCSEs. Some may ask for previous experience in the industry or for them to have completed an Intermediate Apprenticeship.

- Higher Apprenticeship (Level 4/5/6/7; equivalent to a Foundation Degree and above): entry requirements include at least five GCSEs grades A* – C. Most will also expect or require applicants to have subject knowledge related to the particular apprenticeship, for example through A Levels or an Advanced Apprenticeship.

Sectors

Apprenticeship opportunities exist in a wide range of sectors and are offered by both large national companies (such as Google, Sainsbury's, the BBC, Unilever and BMW) and also smaller, local companies.

Qualifications

Assessment at the end of an apprenticeship will test the skills, knowledge and behaviours of the apprentice to see if they are fully competent in their role.

National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage Rates 2020/21

All apprentices under 19, or over 19 and in their first year of their apprenticeship, are entitled to the apprentice rate of £3.90 per hour. After completing the first year of the apprenticeship (and once the apprentice is over 19) they are entitled to the national minimum wage for their age (as below). The rates change every April.

2019*

25 and over	£8.21
21 to 24	£7.70
18 to 20	£6.15
Under 18	£4.35
Apprentice	£3.90

Apprentices must work at least 30 hours (but not more than 40 hours) a week with 20% of this time being spent on achieving their qualification. Additional (non waged) time will also be required for them to complete the apprenticeship qualification in a timely manner.

However, it is important to understand that there are big variations in the actual salaries paid depending on the industry sector, the geographical region and the skill level of the apprenticeship concerned. There is also a long-standing problem with apprentices not being paid the minimum rate by many employers.

* Based on 2019 figures. The National Minimum Wage will rise in April 2020.

Useful websites

University and higher education

www.ucas.com
www.unifrog.org
www.gov.uk/recognised-uk-degrees
www.opendays.com
www.gov.uk/browse/education/universities-higher-education

Student finance

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-online-for-student-finance>
<https://www.gov.uk/studentfinancesteps>
<http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/>
<http://www.slc.co.uk/>
<http://www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/student-finance/undergraduate-student-finance#cost>
<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/finance-and-support/budget-calculator>

Study Abroad

www.Eunicas.ie (English taught courses in Europe)
www.fulbright.org.uk (USA)
www.studyinaustralia.gov.au (Australia)
www.studyoptions.com (Australia and New Zealand)
<https://www.topuniversities.com/where-to-study/home> (details universities in a wide range of countries)

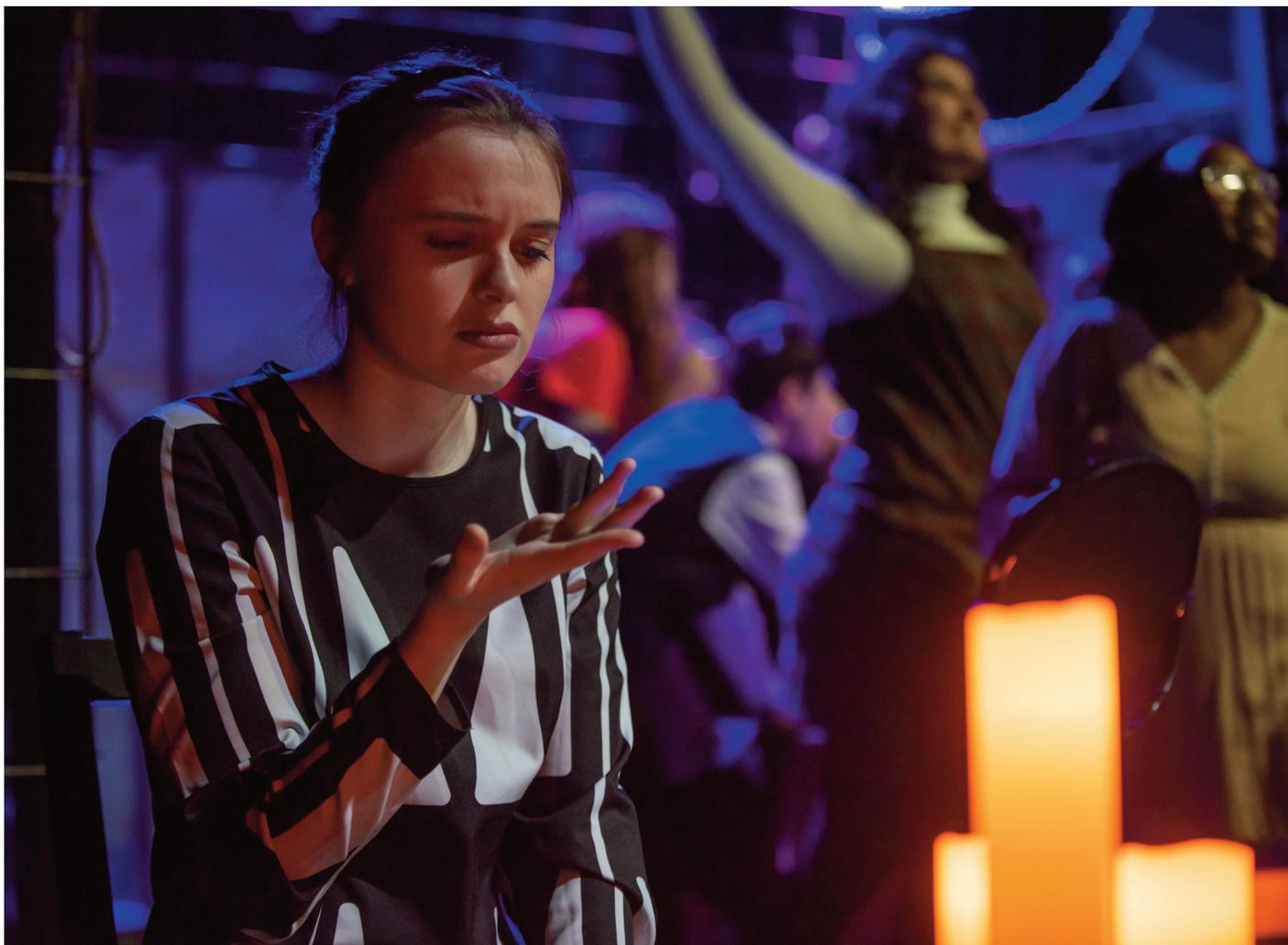
Apprenticeships and careers

www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide
www.gov.uk/browse/education/find-course
<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>
www.prospects.ac.uk

Gap years

www.gapyear.com
www.realgap.co.uk
www.lattitude.org.uk
www.etrust.org.uk
www.gap360.com







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