

UCAS & Higher Education Information

Dear Parent/Student

The information that follows provides a full guide to the process of applying to Higher Education, and forms the basis for students' UCAS preparation. As well as *information sheets* and useful *website links*, there are *templates* to support students' planning and preparation of their application.

We trust you will find it useful. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

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Introduction – applying to university for 2024

In the current economic climate, applying to university has become a decision one cannot take lightly. Students realise that, although tuition fees do not have to be paid ‘up front’, the prospect of finishing with a sizeable debt to pay off over years, means they have to be convinced it is a valuable investment.

A positive benefit to tuition fees is that universities have had to become more accountable to their ‘consumers’, and this continues to bring welcome changes in the quality of assessment and feedback, and of teaching generally. The provision of grants and bursaries has also improved enormously too. This means that *for some students, university is more accessible than it has ever been.*

A further benefit of the move to tuition fees has been the removal of a ‘cap’ on student numbers, particularly for those students achieving the higher grades.

In the words of one university Vice-Chancellor, graduates are still ‘happier, healthier and wealthier’ than non-graduates. At Richard Challoner, we remain committed to doing all we can to support all our students who wish to go onto further study into a Higher Education course.

This booklet offers your son/ daughter a step-by-step guide to researching, deciding and applying for Higher Education via UCAS. The pages, links and folders have been arranged sequentially, as far as possible.

An enormous range of courses & entry requirements

The main qualifications:

Foundation degrees are intermediate qualifications that can form a useful ‘bridge’ between school and university study, or a useful foundation for their intended career path. They are intended to equip learners with the skills and knowledge relevant to their chosen field. They usually take a year to complete and give an FdA or FdSc award.

It would be impossible to list the wide range of Foundation Degree courses available, but you can find courses in many areas of Business, Catering, Construction, Design, Engineering, IT, Marketing, Media, Health, Sport etc.

General Entry Requirements: Set by each institution / course. In general, it is expected that students will have a Level 3 qualification (A levels/ BTECs) or equivalent.

HND/HNC courses are similar to Foundation Degrees. They are vocational courses, usually lasting two years which lead to a Higher National Diploma (HND), Higher National Certificate (HNC). Most HNDs can lead on to a full degree. A *Diploma in Higher Education* (DipHE) is a qualification accredited by a professional body, and provides access to professions such as nursing and social work.

General Entry Requirements: As for Foundation degrees.

Undergraduate Degree Courses

Full or Honours Degree Courses

Degrees in arts and humanities subjects are normally awarded a BA (Bachelor of Arts), while science-related subjects are awarded a BSc (Bachelor of Science). Full degree courses generally take 3 years. *Sandwich courses* - which include periods of practical work in organisations outside the university or college - usually last 4 years.

General Minimum Entry Requirements:

- **Usually 5 GCSEs at grade 4 or above, including English Language and Mathematics or a Science.**
- **At least 2 Level 3 qualifications at grades E (or equivalent) or above.**
- **Most courses only accept students who are aged 18 at the time the course starts.**
- **Students whose first language is not English and who do not have English Language GCSE need a recognised English Language qualification e.g. IELTS (See [IELTS website](#))**

Key Tip: Remember to check the general AND specific entry requirements of each institution and course

HE Institutions & how they differ

'Physical' differences

Universities are very diverse in size, tradition, subject mix, facilities and location.

The universities of Oxford and Cambridge date from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

In England, the older universities were established by Royal Charter or statute.

“Redbrick Universities” are those founded in the 1950s and 1960s.

Former polytechnics were given the status of universities under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. These are sometimes called new universities. They range in size from 4,000 students (University of Abertay, Dundee) to 28,000 students (Manchester Metropolitan University).

The Open University

This is the oldest and most successful institution in the UK offering ‘distance learning’. This allows students to study at home at their own time, on a more flexible schedule. Fees are paid by monthly instalments. See more at www.open.ac.uk

Futurelearn

Began in 2013 and offers **MOOCS** (massive open, online courses) through several leading universities – Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, East Anglia, Exeter, Lancaster, Leeds, London (King's), St. Andrews, Southampton and Warwick. The Open University will also offer courses. Find out more at www.futurelearn.com or the universities listed above.

Differences in quality

There are no official government university league tables. Some newspapers - The Guardian, The Independent and The Times - have their own tables. These league tables are useful as a starting point, but do use them alongside attending open days/ taster courses and your own research. It is also better to use them for individual subject league tables, rather than overall university ratings.

Universities, like schools, are subject to periodic inspection by the **Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education** (QAA). However, its reports do not go into detail about specific courses or departments.

24 of the leading UK universities for research are known as the **Russell Group**: Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Imperial College London, King's College London, Leeds, Liverpool, London School of Economics & Political Science, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Queen Mary University London, Queen's University Belfast, Sheffield, Southampton, University College London, Warwick and York.

Competition for places at these institutions is usually very competitive: as high as 20 applicants per place on some courses.

Key Tip: *Applicants stand a stronger chance of getting a place at Cardiff, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Liverpool, Queen's, Belfast, Queen Mary College, Sheffield and York than at the other Russell Group institutions.*

Teaching and Learning

There is a vast range of teaching and learning styles in Higher Education institutions. Lectures and seminars are the most common. Depending on the course, there may also be group projects, presentations, module and/or synoptic assessment by assignment or exam.

Some courses allow for a period of work abroad and/or in industry. These are known as 'sandwich courses'.

Career v Cost: Is Higher Education worth it?

All the available research suggests that getting a degree improves career opportunities and leads to higher salaries. However, the reform of apprenticeships, and especially, the provision of higher and degree apprenticeships offer very important alternative pathways for many school leavers, which should be thoroughly researched.

Despite the general advantages, we encourage all our students to weigh up the cost of going to university and the job opportunities for graduates very carefully.

The pages and links in this section will help you to research

- the possible career paths open to graduates
- the likely job prospects for different undergraduate degree courses
- the skills and aptitudes that employers are looking for from graduates
- how much degree studies will cost you
- what financial help may be available

Graduate Employment links:

[Explore graduate job opportunities](#)

[What graduates do](#)

Student Finance links:

[Student Finance website](#)

[University Bursaries, Grants and Scholarships](#)

NB Check University websites for cost of living information

[Helpful advice from Martin Lewis' website](#)

Tuition fees

Universities and colleges can charge new students up to £9,250 a year.

Most students take out a **student loan** to cover the cost of tuition fees, accommodation and living expenses. You only start repaying this loan once you have finished studying and are earning more than £25,000 a year. Loans have to be repaid, but grants, scholarships and bursaries do not.

You should apply for the student loan as soon as the website is live (usually March/April of the year when you will start university) – just enter the details of your firm choice place. If necessary, you can inform Student Finance England (SFE) later of any change to your place of study.

For full details on applying for student finance, please [click here](#).

Maintenance Loans

Maintenance loans help with living costs. Please [click here](#) for details on maintenance loans and for a maintenance loan calculator. (A proportion of the loan is available without means testing; the rest is subject to means testing.)

Bursaries and Scholarships

There are bursaries and scholarships available at most institutions. The awarding of bursaries is usually dependent on household income, whereas scholarships are available for exceptional performance, regardless of household income. Please see [this link to the UCAS website for further details](#).

Further details on undergraduate fees and student loans are [available here](#).

Living expenses

These vary greatly, depending on where you are studying, and especially whether you are living at home or are paying for your accommodation. The cost of living is higher in some parts of the UK than others.

To manage your finances carefully, you will need to have a clear picture of your income and essential expenses. By subtracting these from your income you will know how much you can spend on other things. The lists below give an idea of what these might involve:

Essential Costs

- Tuition fees
- Rent
- Travel
- Contents insurance
- Car bills
- Credit card payments
- Utility bills, e.g. gas, TV licence, phone etc.
- Food, drink etc.

Income

- Student loan
- Grant or bursary*
- Sponsorship*
- Scholarship*
- Parental/guardian contributions
- Income from a job
- Savings

*subject to entitlement

Other Expenses

- Books/equipment
- Household goods
- Clothes/shoes
- Music/films
- Social activities

To plan for budgeting, the [Save the Student website](#) provides some helpful information.

Your HE OPTIONS

Overview Questions:

1. Do I want to continue my education post-18 at a university or a college?
2. What course(s) would be best to study?
3. Which institution(s) would be most suited to my needs?

By the end of Year 12, some students already have their future career plans firmly decided and know what HE qualification they need to reach their goal. They may well feel confident about their choices and the steps they need to take in the future. *However, they may be over-confident or unrealistic.*

Others, perhaps the majority, do not have a clear career goal, and therefore aren't sure whether to continue in HE, or if they should, what course they should take. Doubts of this type can lead to feelings of anxiety and insecurity. *There is no need to worry, but there is no excuse for putting things off. If you are waiting to be certain about your future, you'll be waiting a long time!*

Some students are quite sure that university is not for them – they have had enough of books and writing, and now they just want to get a job and earn money. Some may know what type of work they would like to do; others may not. *That's fine, as long as you have looked at all the options, listened to advice, and have worked out an alternative job plan. However, it is usually worth starting the UCAS application process, even if you don't expect to go to university, since that way you can keep options open.*

Key Things to Remember:

- Don't put off difficult and important decisions about your future - **keep to the school deadlines for UCAS applications.**
- Don't dismiss the idea of going to university just because no one in your family has been, or out of misguided prejudice.
- Get a clear idea of what you can realistically aspire to - and what you can't.
- Be keen to seek out and listen to the advice of others!

Deciding what to study and where

This is a long, complex and difficult process.

The pages and links in this section are designed to help you go about it in a thorough and methodical way.

It is particularly important that you take notes as you research, so as to avoid having to go back to check over important details.

Weblinks:


Key Sites:

 [UCAS website](#)

 [University Open Days](#)

 [UCAS – Parents' Newsletter sign-up](#)

Newspaper guides and rankings

 [The Guardian University Guide](#)

 [The Complete University Guide \(The Independent\)](#)

 [The Independent - Student Section](#)

 [The Times Good University Guide](#)

Other unofficial university guide

 [Independent University Guide - Push](#)

Foundation Courses:

 [Foundation Degree information & search](#)

Dentistry, Medicine, Veterinary courses:

 [Dental Schools Council website](#)

 [Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons](#)

 [Alternative Careers in Veterinary Science](#)

 [General Medical Council](#)

 [UCAT](#)

 [BMAT](#) – please note changes from 2024

 [Medical Schools Council](#)

Oxbridge:

 [Cambridge Undergraduate Admissions](#)

 [Cambridge Application Process](#)

 [Cambridge Undergraduate courses](#)


 [Cambridge Colleges](#)

 [Oxford Application Process](#)

 [Oxford Undergraduate Courses](#)

 [Oxford Colleges](#)

 [Oxford Interview Guide](#)

 [Oxbridge Admissions - applications and experiences](#) – this is an unofficial website in which Oxbridge applicants have logged their experiences of interviews.

What restrictions are there on course choices?

The UCAS system imposes some important restrictions on the number and range of courses you can apply for:

- You only write one personal statement that is sent to all the universities you apply to, so the same statement has to 'work' for all. In practice, this means that you should only apply to courses which are confined to one or two subject areas.
- **FIVE** degree courses (including more than one course at the same institution);
or
- **FOUR** in the case of (i) Medicine, (ii) Dentistry and (iii) Veterinary Medicine or Veterinary Science.
- You CANNOT apply to both Oxford and Cambridge.

What type of degree course appeals to you?

Choosing a Degree Course

Here are some initial ideas to consider about the type of course you want to study:

1. to continue with a subject you are studying in the Sixth Form and are familiar with, e.g. Maths, Physics, Art.
2. a completely new subject – maybe one not available at A Level, such as Social Anthropology, Marine Biology, Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Linguistics or Genetics.
3. to link two subjects together in a joint degree course. These could be two familiar subjects or two new subjects or one of each.
4. to study three or more subjects in a combined or modular degree.
5. a vocational degree course leading towards a particular career (e.g. teaching, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, and physiotherapy).
6. a sandwich course (4 years) which will include a year in the workplace or abroad.
7. a foundation degree

What to look for in a UCAS search result

Key Tip: The UCAS search facility gives a helpful summary, but it is just that, a summary. You **MUST** research the details of course in the university prospectus or website!

The **SUMMARY** of the course on the UCAS website gives the following information:

- Summary of the course at that university
- Type/ length/ mode of qualification
- Methods of assessment
- Application codes
- Entry requirements
- Fee information
- Do click through links to the university's website for more details – highly recommended!

The UCAS Tariff

The Tariff converts different qualifications into common entry points to Higher Education. Some of the UCAS tariff is shown below.

Other qualifications also earn you points, e.g. Music Grades, ASDAN, CACHE etc. However, universities are usually more interested in the UCAS points earned from A levels/ BTECs rather than what might be termed 'peripheral' qualifications.

The table below shows the Tariff points for key qualifications.

Extended Project Qualification	A level	New Tariff points	BTEC Subsidiary Diploma
	A*	56	D*
	A	48	D
	B	40	
	C	32	M
A*		28	
A	D	24	
B		20	
C	E	16	P
D		12	
		10	
E		8	
		6	

Some typical offers and points

A*A*A*	168 points
A*AA	152 points
AAB	136 points
ABB	128 points
BBB	120 points
BCC	104 points
CCC	96 points

N.B Many universities are showing their typical offers in just grades or in grades and points.

To calculate the value of your points, see:

[UCAS TARIFF CALCULATOR](#)

Aptitude Tests

Some replacement of the **BMAT** for Medicine at Brighton and Sussex, Imperial, Lancaster, UCL, Cambridge, Leeds and Oxford: [to be confirmed](#).

Oxford University Aptitude Tests are required for a number of courses - see the link for details.

LNAT National Admissions Test for Law used by 11 law schools.

STEP required for Mathematics at Cambridge and Warwick, and encouraged by Bristol, Oxford and Imperial College.

UCAT An aptitude test for Medicine and Dentistry used by 26 universities.

Cambridge Admissions Assessments are required for a range of courses at Cambridge.

Websites:

- [BMAT](#)
- [Oxford Courses requiring admissions tests*](#)
- [Cambridge Admissions assessments*](#)
- [LNAT*](#)
- [STEP](#)
- [UCAT*](#)

*IMPORTANT: Deadlines and test dates vary from year to year, so check the relevant website well in advance

Shortlisting Courses

Use the UCAS website, university prospectuses, and other sources to make your initial shortlist. You don't need to use all the spaces provided, but there is no harm in having quite a long shortlist!

University/ Course	Course code	Entry requirements	What I like about it	Any negative factors?

University/Course analysis sheet

For courses/institutions that really interest you, making a record of important information about it based on information found on the UCAS websites and, most importantly, the university's own course web page can be really helpful:

Course:

Institution:

Degree type: (BSc/BA...) Length (yrs):

Required grades/points:

Required/preferred Subjects

Required/preferred Units:

Course Entry Profile (if applicable):

Fees:

Bursaries and scholarships:

Course structure, content, assessment methods, (and professional accreditation if applicable):

Information from other sources

Accommodation:

Living Costs:

Social, cultural & sporting facilities:

Questions to ask at Open Day/interview:

Impressions from Open Day:

Overall assessment:

Special Needs

Universities and other higher education institutions are extremely well-equipped and well-funded to meet the learning needs of students. However, many young people do not make sufficient use of the help that is available to them.

It is well worth their while investigating and applying for the support they are entitled to.

Entering your needs on your UCAS application

When you complete your online UCAS application, you are able to tell the university in advance of your learning needs, by answering the question: *what support do you require?* In your answer, give details of

- your disability, special need and/or medical condition;
- any arrangements that you have needed, or found helpful in your learning up to now (e.g. a reader, scribe, extra time, etc.)

If you do require support, DO NOT leave this question blank.

Example UCAS entry:

Disability/Special needs	
Category	You have two or more impairments and/or disabling medical conditions
Please give details of any special needs	I have Asperger's Syndrome and am dyslexic

The first entry is made by choosing from a drop-down selection. The second is one that you type in yourself.

Universities and colleges will consider your application on the same academic criteria as any other, and any medical information will remain confidential.

If a university or college cannot meet your needs, you can ask UCAS to substitute another choice.

As soon as you receive your first offer of a university place, you can apply for a **Disabled Student Allowance (DSA)** through your Local Authority.

Applying for a Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)

Key things to know:

- It is available for anyone doing at least 50 per cent of a full-time course
- It is non-means tested: in other words, it is not linked to your parents' income
- It consists of a number of allowances:
 - General Allowance: books, photocopying, consumables
 - Equipment Allowance: desktop computer, software, recording devices, etc.
 - Specialist Equipment Allowance
 - Non-Medical Helpers Allowance: IT training, study skills support, readers + scribes etc.
 - Travel Allowance

For help and information, see

- the UCAS website: <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/individual-needs/disabled-students>
- DSA Local Access Centre: <http://www.ace-assess.org/>

Preparing the UCAS application

What are admissions tutors looking for?

There may be differences between institutions and courses about the priorities, but all expect evidence of the following:

Academic potential - the more your actual academic performance and predicted grades exceed the minimum entry requirements asked for by the course, the stronger your application will be. If there are particular personal circumstances that may have adversely affected your GCSE or End of Year 12 results, let your referee know, and provide relevant medical evidence if appropriate.

Enthusiasm & Interest - your personal statement should be full of examples of how your interest and enthusiasm for your chosen course of study has been exhibited in and out of school: participation and engagement with the subject, involvement in super-curricular activities, work experience, visits, trips, taster courses, etc.

Relevant experience - some courses, especially those leading to a profession such as law and medicine, expect applicants to have done relevant work experience and voluntary placements.

Personal qualities and transferrable skills - the way you write about your interest for the subject, what you have gained from your relevant experiences, and what you show of your leisure interests and hobbies, will reveal a lot about your personal qualities and those skills which are useful in a variety of situations: personal organisation, reliability, honesty, the ability to communicate effectively, teamwork, use of ICT, etc.

How will your application be initially assessed?

An Admissions Tutor may need to sift through thousands of applications for just a hundred or so places. Initially, the basic requirements of applications are considered and *if they are not met, the application could be rejected outright*:

1. **Age**: Students at HEIs are usually expected to be 18 by the October they start.
2. **Type of qualifications**: GCSE grades, predicted A Level grades need to show that minimum entry requirements can be reached. Some courses/institutions expect to see particular grades at GCSE. Do check!
3. **Basic requirements**: e.g. English Language qualification / Maths GCSE at 4/5 or above.
4. Your **Personal Statement** - poor spelling/grammar could be sufficient for your application to be rejected.
5. Some courses require you take an *Admissions Test*.

If your application satisfies the basic requirements, it will be considered further and in more detail.

The Personal Statement

Your Personal Statement should match your *motivation* (for carrying on your education), your *enthusiasm* (for your chosen course), and your *relevant skills and experience*, with those the university is looking for.

Unless you are called for interview, this is your only chance to show the admissions tutors that you are right for the course, and that the course is right for you.

Be careful with your grammar and your spelling – it is essential that your personal statement is written correctly and well presented. Do not rely on the spell-checker!

All applications are electronically checked for **plagiarism**.

MAKE SURE THE WHOLE STATEMENT IS YOUR OWN WORK.

Some technical details

Most personal statements are about 600 words (2/3 of an A4 page typed in 12 pt) in length. You can enter up to 4,000 characters (this includes spaces) or 47 lines of text (this includes blank lines), whichever comes first. You do not have to use all the space provided.

The online system is such that you cannot use *italics*, **bold**, underlining or foreign characters (such as á, ë, ñ) in your personal statement - the system will automatically remove these when saved. This will not disadvantage your application.

Draft your personal statement in a word-processor first. When your mentor is happy with it, you can upload it onto your application. If it is too long, a message will show by how many lines/characters it is too long. It will not be saved until it is reduced to be within the character limit.

Useful Online Guide:

UniRise

[A range of videos talking through various aspects of the personal statement](#)

Admissions tutors ask 'Would it be enjoyable to teach this student?'

- Specific aspects of the course that interest you
- Examples of coursework you have been particularly engaged by
- Practical work you have enjoyed and why
- Books, articles, etc. you have read related to the subject area and questions that these have raised / ideas sparked by these
- Work experience or voluntary work in this area and what you have learnt from this
- Conferences you have attended (or visits/ trips made) and ideas/ specific interests sparked by these
- Personal experiences that have led to the decision to take this subject
- Where you hope a degree in this subject will take you in the future

Things your Personal Statement should demonstrate clearly

- Your motivation for your chosen course - this is particularly important when you're applying for a subject that you have not studied before.
- Evidence that you understand what is required to study the course, e.g. showing an awareness of how scientific a psychology course is.
- How your current or previous studies relate to your chosen course(s).
- Why you want to go to university or college.

Examples of skills and aptitudes valued in academic life

Resilience	Resourcefulness
Perseverance	Curiosity
Managing Distractions	Flexibility
Focused	Questioning
Courage to take risks	Imagining
Independent	Analysis
Methodical	Thinking
Open minded	Playful

Reflectiveness	Reciprocity
Reasoning	Interdependence
Re-working	Receptive
Making links	Attentive
Evaluating	Collaboration
Accuracy	Empathy
Distilling	Listening
Noticing	
Planning	

Use the planning sheets on the next pages to help you gather your evidence together and plan your personal statement effectively before writing it.

Planning your personal statement: the 80%

This is not so much about having done lots of activities (although that does reveal a genuine interest and commitment in itself), but more about what you have learnt from these. (Print out/ use as many of these as you need!)

Super-curriculum activities: What I've read/ watched/ done related to the subject I'm applying for ...	What did I learn? What was most surprising about it, and why? What did I find most interesting, and why, and how have I followed up on that interest? What questions did it make me ask (and what kind of answers occurred to me/ did I investigate)? How do I think what I've learnt could be applied?

Planning your personal statement: the 20%

This is about 'proving' that you have the skills/ attributes that will make you successful at university/
in an apprenticeship/ school leavers' programme/ job.

What have I done? (eg. piece of work, activity, sport participation, music – learning an instrument/ playing or singing in a group, drama, exam result, work experience, D of E, Scouts, visit, extra-curricular activity etc)	What skill(s)/ attribute(s) needed for success does this show? How? (eg. resilience, determination, time management, attention to detail, creativity, communication skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork, independent work, resourcefulness, initiative, leadership, making connections, courage to take risks, open minded, curious, evaluation, planning etc)

Punctuation rules

QUOTES & CITATIONS

If you include a quote in your personal statement, it should be in quotation marks: '...'.
'...'

USE OF CAPITAL LETTERS

The personal pronoun 'I' is always written with a capital letter.

Capital letters are used with:

Names and titles of people *Winston Churchill* *the Queen of England*

Titles of works, books etc. *War and Peace* *The Merchant of Venice*

Titles of degree courses *Economics, Medicine, Zoology*

Months of the year, days of the week, seasons, holiday periods *Summer, Boxing Day*

Geographical names... names of countries and continents, regions, states, districts, cities, towns, villages, rivers, oceans, seas, lakes, geographical formations

Europe, Switzerland, Lake Geneva, the Alps etc.

Adjectives relating to nationality or historical era

Chinese restaurant, German literature, Victorian architecture

Names of streets, buildings, parks etc.

Capital letters are used for the following nouns related to school life:

Year 12, Sixth Form, Form Tutor

ALL SCHOOL SUBJECTS: *English, Theatre Studies, Physics etc.*

Capital letters are NOT used for the following nouns related to school life:

Nouns to do with academic institutions and disciplines do not have capital letters when they are used in a general, unspecific way:

course, university - *I am looking forward to university life*

BUT - *I visited Glasgow University*

mathematical, historical, medical etc. - *I enjoy historical documentaries*

BUT - *I am a member of the Historical Association*

medicine, physics, science - *I have always been fascinated by scientific matters*

BUT

- *I want to pursue my interest in Science at degree level*

Use of colons

Use a colon to introduce lists of things: items in a series. The first sequence before a colon must be an independent clause or complete sentence. The following sentence is incorrect:

My favourite animals are: lions, tigers, and hippopotamuses.

This sentence is correct: *Bob sometimes catches small animals: birds, snakes, moles and mice.*

Use a colon to connect two independent clauses when the second enlarges on or explains the first.

The students had a great idea: they would set up their own newspaper.

Use of semicolons

The semicolon means to stop briefly; then go ahead. Complete sentences connected by semicolons should be closely related.

When angry, count four; when sleepy, count sheep.

When sentences are joined with a conjunction (and, but, or, for, nor, yet, so), use commas.

Use a semicolon (or full-stop) before these adverbs and conjunctions: *accordingly, besides, consequently, furthermore, hence, however, indeed, instead, likewise, meanwhile, moreover, nevertheless, nonetheless, otherwise, then, therefore, thus, too.*

Compare these two sentences; both are correct:

The protestors have a valid point; however, I don't agree with their use of violence.

The protestors have a valid point, but I don't agree with their use of violence.

Completing the UCAS Application

All details regarding the completion of the UCAS application, including the 'buzzword' needed to connect the students' applications to the school, will be given on Monday June 26th.

In the meantime, all students should register with [UCAS Hub](#) as this will be the portal used for all applications.

After applying

Once the form is at UCAS

Once your application has been sent to UCAS, an acknowledgement letter/ email will be sent, giving you a **UCAS Track password** for the applicant enquiry service **Track** on the UCAS website. Make a careful note of it! You will need it to track the progress of your application.

Offers

Universities make offers through the winter and spring terms. Be ready for some frustrating periods when nothing seems to be happening, since some institutions take longer than others to process applications.

UCAS will inform you by letter/ email as soon as an institution makes you an offer. By logging on to **Track** at www.ucas.com, you will see whether the college or university is offering you a place, and if so, on what terms.

Types of Offers

An offer may be either unconditional or conditional, and will tell you the year & month that your course starts, and the point of entry (in most cases, this is 1st year).

An **UNCONDITIONAL OFFER (U)** means that you have met all the entrance requirements and the university or college is happy to have you on the course. The college or university will contact you if they need proof of your qualifications. However, the offer may specify requirements, such as financial or medical conditions, that you must meet before you can join the course.

A **CONDITIONAL OFFER (C)** means that the university or college has made you an offer that depends on certain conditions: you must get certain grades/points overall.

You must meet the conditions of your offer by 31 August even if your offer is for deferred entry.

ACCEPTING & REJECTING OFFERS

Once you have received decisions from **all** your choices, UCAS will send you a *Replying to Offers* letter or email. You now have to decide to hold on to two offers.

You must reply to each offer in one of the following ways.

- Firm acceptance (F). (You will definitely accept the place if you get the grades)
- Insurance acceptance (I). (If you don't get your Firm, you will accept this offer)
- Decline (D)

Here are the possible combinations of decisions you will be left with:

CF Firmly accepted **C**onditional offer

CF + CI Firmly accepted **C**onditional offer plus a **C**onditional offer that you have accepted as an **I**nsurance

CF + UI Firmly accepted **C**onditional offer plus an **U**nconditional offer that you have accepted as an **I**nsurance

UF Firmly accepted **U**nconditional offer. You cannot have an **I**nsurance choice.

Do seek advice from appropriate people at this point. You should think carefully before you decide which offers to accept because once you accept an offer, including an insurance offer, **you are bound contractually to that course**. You should be happy that both the course and the college or university are right for you, because you will be spending the next three or four years there. There may still be time to attend open day(s) or visit the university or college before you make your decision.

You can reply to the offers using Track at www.ucas.com.

WHEN TO REPLY

You should send your reply as soon as possible after you receive your *Replying to Offers* letter. UCAS must receive your reply at the very latest by the date printed on the letter.

If you do not reply by the deadline date, your offers will be withdrawn.

The earliest reply date will probably be in early May. However, the date on the letter is your individual reply date; it may be different from other people's reply dates.

If you achieve better results than you expected, it will be possible, for a short time in August, to look at an alternative course that still has spaces available, while still holding your Firm choice.

If you change your mind after accepting an offer, you can still withdraw, but you will not be able to apply for other courses or go through Clearing in the same year. However, you can apply again in the next application cycle.

INTERVIEWS

Not all students get asked to attend interviews. Some departments organise Open Days specifically for students who have applied to them. Although they are not formal interviews, if you make a good impression it can help decide whether you are offered a place, or how low an offer you receive. A lot of the following advice can help for both formal and informal interview situations.

Interview Preparation

- Know why you want to study that course.
- Know why you want to study at that university.
- Use prospectuses and websites to find tips and commonly asked questions in your subject field.
- Do some background reading about the course.
- Think through what you can say about relevant topics from the courses you are currently studying.
- Prepare carefully to talk about any related experience you have: the skills you were introduced to, the things you liked and the things you learned.
- For courses that lead to a profession, you need to be able to speak knowledgeably about your interest in that career.
- Check your personal statement and be prepared to respond in detail to questions about what you have written.
- Think about how you are going to get there - you do not want to be late.

What are interviewers looking for?

- They want evidence that you will be a committed and enthusiastic student - who will cope with the work and survive the length of the course.
- Someone who shows that they can present their ideas and arguments well.
- That when you are a student you will not need spoon feeding and that you will enjoy working independently.
- That you are enthusiastic about the subject.

Tips for the Interview itself

- Try and find out how formal the interview will be and dress appropriately.
- Remember that most people are nervous before interviews - bear in mind that you would not have been invited if the university was not interested in you.
- Allow yourself thinking time before answering difficult questions.
- Remember that problem-solving questions require you to consider an issue from different points of view, as well as arriving at a personal opinion or preferred course of action.
- Speak clearly and try to answer every question.
- Don't pretend to be anything you are not.
- Be prepared – you shouldn't learn your answers to likely questions 'parrot-fashion' but you should plan out your answers to the most important questions in writing; note-form is best.
- Be enthusiastic!
- Have some questions that you want to ask them - these may be about aspects of the course that particularly interest you and you want more information about. (Don't ask questions to which you could easily have found out the information via their website though!)

UCAS EXTRA

If you find yourself without an offer, for whatever reason, and you have used all five choices already, **ucasextra** enables you to have an additional choice through UCAS. This means you do not have to wait until Clearing to continue to find a place.

The **ucasextra** procedure operates from mid-March to the end of June/ beginning of July. Universities and colleges with vacancies will list them on the UCAS website.

Applicants who are eligible will be able to refer themselves electronically via

ucastrack for courses with vacancies.

The courses available through **ucasextra** will be highlighted on the **ucascourse** service on our website. Or you can contact universities and colleges direct.

Who is eligible?

You will be eligible for Extra if:

- you have used all five of your choices; and
- you have had unsuccessful or withdrawal decisions for all your choices; or
- you have cancelled your outstanding choices and hold no offers; or
- you have received replies back from all five choices and have declined all offers made to you.

How does it work?

If you are made an offer, you can then choose whether or not to accept it. If you decide to accept a conditional offer, you will not be able to take any further part in Extra.

If you decline an offer or the university or college turns you down, you will be given another opportunity to use **ucasextra**, time permitting. If you have been using **ucastrack**, your **ucasextra** button will be re-activated. Once you have accepted an offer in **ucasextra**, you are committed to it in the same way as you would be with an offer through the main UCAS system. If you are unsuccessful, decline an offer, or do not receive an offer within 15 days of choosing a course through Extra, you can make a further application.

CLEARING

Clearing is a UCAS service for people who have not been successful in getting the grades required for their first and second choice institutions. You are eligible for Clearing if:

- you have not withdrawn from the UCAS scheme
- you hold no offers
- your offers have not been confirmed because you have not met the conditions (such as not achieving the required grades)
- you declined your offers
- you have applied after 30 June

If you are eligible, UCAS will automatically indicate this when you log in to Apply.

How does it work?

Lists of courses with vacancies will be published from the middle of August until late September in **The Independent**, **The Independent on Sunday** and **The Mirror**, as well as on the UCAS website. Check the lists for courses that interest you and then contact the university or college to ask if it will accept you. It is a good idea to do this yourself because the admissions tutor will want to speak to you personally, not a parent or teacher. If you accept a place through Clearing, you will be sent a letter of Confirmation automatically.

Deadline Dates 2023-2024

The dates below have been internally set in order to allow for the time consuming processes of checking applications, adding references, approving references and sending to UCAS in time to meet the UCAS deadlines (of 16th October for early applications and 31st January for other applications). They **MUST** be adhered to.

‘Early applicants’ refer to those students applying for any course at Oxbridge, or for Medicine, Dentistry, or Veterinary Science, or for a Music course at a Conservatoire.

Wednesday 17th May	Deadline for planning of your personal statement. On the afternoon of 17 th May, you will be using this planning to write the first draft of your personal statement.
Monday 22nd May	Deadline for submission of the first draft of your personal statement to your mentor. Feedback will be given on this before the end of term to allow you to work on it during the Summer holidays.
Friday 1st September <i>(for early applicants)</i>	Second (much improved) draft of Personal Statement to be submitted for further feedback to UniRise
Friday 8th September <i>(for non- early applicants)</i>	Second (much improved) draft of Personal Statement to be submitted for further feedback to UniRise
Friday 15th September <i>(for early applicants)</i>	Third draft of Personal Statement (final chance for feedback) to be submitted to UniRise
Friday 13th October <i>(for non- early applicants)</i>	Third draft of Personal Statement (final chance for feedback) to be submitted to UniRise
Friday 22nd September	All <i>early applications</i> to have been completed and ‘sent’
Monday 30th October	All UCAS applications to have been completed and ‘sent’

KEY DATE tbc: A LEVEL RESULTS DAY THURSDAY 15TH AUGUST 2024: MAKE SURE YOU ARE AT HOME!