

# UCAS Reference examples

## UCAS reference

The UCAS reference has three structured sections. These changes were designed with providers, allowing the reference to focus on the areas they want to know more about.

These examples have been supplied by providers and advisers and are designed to show the range of different references that have supported students in gaining places at their chosen courses and universities. Provider feedback over the 2024 cycle has emphasised that references are only one part of the admissions process and are useful in supporting the application by supplying additional context about the applicant. There is no one best or good way to write a reference – the key thing is that the information is concise, relevant and factual.

Please see our additional advice and guidance on how to complete the reference for 2024 and access further support materials. <https://www.ucas.com/advisers/writing-references/changes-undergraduate-references-2024-entry>

As with all aspects of the application process, we also suggest you continue speaking to universities and colleges, who will be able to give specific advice and guidance if required.

## Examples for Establishment Details

*Enter a general statement about your school/college/centre*

[There is a reference template (under centre management) in the adviser portal that can be used to create a standard statement which can be quickly added to each student's reference.]

UCAS College is an open access sixth form institution with a full-time student body of c.2,000. We recruit primarily from the borough's varied comprehensive schools, but also attract students from further afield. Level 3 students undertake 3 A levels or applied general equivalents, together with an enrichment programme. We offer a wide range of BTEC and Cambridge Technical courses at all levels. A number of our university applicants will have enrolled on Level 2 programmes with us before embarking on study at Level 3. We base predicted grades on end of first year exams where available, alongside internal assessments and a range of other work students have completed.

The Sixth Form College has more than 2,000 students with a range of A level and vocational courses on offer. It is worth noting the Access course at the college is validated and moderated, and is recognised by QAA. There is no overall Diploma grade. To achieve the Diploma, students' study three subject modules and either a three-credit unit in maths or academic writing to attain 60 credits, 15 of which are not graded, 45 are awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction grade. A Pass indicates that a student has achieved all the learning outcomes and is well suited to undergraduate work.

UCAS School is a state selective grammar school with a coeducational sixth form of nearly 400 students. Around a half of our sixth formers join us from a range of non-selective schools in the area. The school offers A level programmes of study in 22 subjects. Entry requirements are currently 48 points from eight GCSE subjects (including English Language and Maths).

Most students study three A levels together with the Extended Project or Core Maths qualification which is taken in Year 12. A number will opt to take four, particularly talented mathematicians who study Further Maths either to AS or to full A level.

Students sit rigorous internal assessments at the end of Year 12; this data, together with students' performance throughout the year, is used to formulate the predicted grades.

The Sixth Form serves a diverse community where deprivation is surprisingly high. This is exemplified by the fact that the school is in one of the 10% most deprived areas; it also falls into the first POLAR3 quintile and has 22% of students declaring FSM eligibility. In January, Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training) declared that the school required significant improvement; this category applied to the school until July.

The school offers a mix of A levels, BTEC, and Welsh Bacallaureate qualifications. Predicted grades have been generated from a holistic overview of performance and end of year assessment.

UCAS School and Sixth Form Centre is a large, comprehensive, and inclusive academy. Typically, students take three A levels or combine A level study with a BTEC course. The EPQ and Core Maths qualifications are additional options open to all students. This is one of the poorest wards in the region. 40% of students qualify for pupil premium and many are the first in their family to apply for university.

Internal exams and assessments sat in Y13 are used to inform predicted grades. Students end of term exams results in Year 12 are used to base predicted grades for October deadline courses.

UCAS High School is a small, rural, comprehensive school on the edge of the XX. It is in an area affected by coastal deprivation, and poor access to further and higher education. The school offers a range of higher qualifications – 25 different subjects, however, ten of these are delivered through multi-level classes alongside National 5 students.

Students can study a number of Advanced Highers. In our setting this may mean they are in a bi-level class with Higher students, or they may receive just three taught periods a week, unlike bigger schools where there is a more comprehensive taught offer. The onus is on students to work independently and organise their study time effectively.

UCAS Academy is an 11-18 mixed secondary school. There are approximately 30 students in the Sixth Form. Each year approximately 50% of students in the upper sixth progress to university. Students study either A-level, Applied or Technical qualifications. Students who attend UCAS Academy are typically based within an area of low higher education participation (Polar 4).

RAAC Implications for current cohort: Throughout the Academic Year UCAS Academy closed due to Government guidelines. Staff were required to upload online work and resources for students for remote learning, however, in our demographic this was problematic as not all students were able to access remote learning.

Agent UCAS helps students from around the world achieve their ambition of studying overseas at university. We support international students to apply for entry to an undergraduate or graduate degree program, and work with universities to create unique preparation programs designed for those students who don't yet meet the university's requirements. Our undergraduate and postgraduate pathway programs support students in improving their English and developing their subject-specific academic knowledge. With our support, we'll help to ensure students comfortably settle into life in a new country and are ready to succeed.

## Examples for Extenuating Circumstances

*Enter any information about extenuating circumstances which may have impacted the applicant's education and achievement*

Catrin's Year 12 assessment, along with the rest of her cohort, was impacted by an unfortunate staffing challenge, which led to her class having two new teachers in the space of three months. She has recovered well from the disruption and remains positive, and we feel that her tenacity will help her to close some of the gap. However, her final grades may not truly reflect her natural intellect and ability.

Ross moved sixth form centre having spent the previous five years at one of our feeder schools. Transitioning to a new environment represented a challenge for Ross and he took longer to adjust than his peers. He and our pastoral team worked very closely together during the first two terms to ensure that Ross developed the skills and confidence needed to succeed.

He has expressed some anxiety about transitioning into another new learning environment and we would recommend a proactive approach from Ross's future tutors in offering access to support materials. We are happy to discuss accommodations further if required.

Outside of school, Munroe takes on significant responsibilities within his family by supporting his mum in caring for his three young siblings. It's to his credit that he does this, but early in his National 5 studies it did create pressure when he had competing deadlines for internally assessed work. He has been very open with us about balancing his home life and studies and we have been delighted to support him with flexibility on deadlines.

Jordan was diagnosed with eye disorder that can cause worsening (progressive) vision loss for which there is no treatment and is registered as visually impaired. It has been a life-changing diagnosis. We ensured Jordan sat at the front of the class, all lectures printed off in A3 handouts or given as PowerPoint (to his personal ipad) as he is unable to read the board. The school have contacted the examination board on his behalf.

Joyah's attainment profile reflects considerable disruption and challenging circumstances in her personal life which have significantly impacted on her L2 marks and L3 mocks. I would be happy to discuss these sensitive circumstances in more detail. Life is becoming more stable, and this is reflected in an upturn in her work; she is now on track to return to her higher levels of attainment.

Chao achieved a handful of grade 8 results in his GCSEs but as a whole, do not accurately reflect the grades he is now on track to achieve. Significant change in attitude saw him achieve high results in his internal assessments. He has approached his Level 3 studies with a greater degree of maturity and we have confidence that the predictions are accurate

### **Examples for other supportive information**

*Outline any supportive information specific to the applicant that you think universities/colleges should be aware of, or how they can support the applicant*

Rose is the strongest of a large cohort and an outstanding Biologist. Her wider reading and passion for the subject underpins her vast subject knowledge and she was involved in the Biology Olympiad, achieving a Silver Award. An exceptional chemist, she is one of the most able in the cohort, consistently placed in the top 5% in assessments.

Practical skills within the sciences is of particular note, gaining high marks in her practical exam. Her practical skills also benefited her in her recent study of aspirin which she completed to a very high standard. She used her highly developed manipulative skills to synthesise aspirin and then successfully analysed her sample using thin layer chromatography and NMR spectroscopy.

Jess is significantly above her peers for all her subjects especially in history, particularly excelling at written responses.

She has led the student council at our school.

Pakrut participated in extra voluntary sessions for his maths A level to ensure he is on target and has become a mentor towards some of the younger students.

Pakrut was awarded the Service Prize, in recognition of his exceptional contribution to fundraising for various charity projects including his organisation of a school dance production for the orphanages in Mumbai.

Charlotte is an outstanding student, who is hardworking and dedicated. Charlotte supports her family with her younger sibling and volunteers at their school. Charlotte is a well respected volunteer at this school and works well with students with disabilities. Her caring and warm nature will lend perfectly to her chosen career and Charlotte will make an outstanding student at University.

Jasmine's refocus has opened new opportunities and her subject choice reflected her desire to pursue Business and Hospitality and we fully support her endeavour. Strong-willed, tenacious attitude will ensure she succeeds in whatever she puts her mind to  
Self-motivating, independent and varied interests have seen her win the Scouts regional cookery competition

Isaac possesses good communication skills and is always happy to provide cogent answers in class. Isaac has developed the ability to construct an effective essay that is tightly structured and supported by well chosen evidence. He is also capable of convincingly evaluating disparate sources.

In Chemistry Amira achieved the highest aggregate grade in our Year 12 cohort of 75, with two A\*s in her end of year exams. She is an outstanding historian, absorbing new concepts and skills with ease and ranking first in an able cohort of 170 students. She is also one of the strongest philosophers to study here in recent years, ranking first out of our cohort of 45 students, with an average mark of 89.7% and a mock exam score of 92%.

Determined. Hard-Working. Bright.

James is a force of nature (for good in the world). The first time I met him I knew that he had the capacity to change the world for the better. He thinks very deeply about moral issues and problems, which makes him ideally suited for this degree. His teachers certainly agree:

1. Regularly gets A/A\*s in essay responses.
2. He is undoubtedly an academic and ambitious student who strives for excellence in every lesson.
3. He thinks deeply beyond the curriculum, often reading academic journals and attending scholars' talks.
4. He is particularly strong at grappling with the social, cultural, historical and political conditions of his set texts.
5. Essays are often crafted with detail that offer subtle and astute ideas that demonstrate his intellectual curiosity.
6. He is probably one of the most engaged members I have taught in my 17 years of teaching. Constantly bringing thoughtful arguments to class debates and discussions.
7. He not only has enjoyed the topics of representation of under-represented groups in political life but has also enjoyed the political ideologies part of the course.
8. He is a regular campaigner for LGBTQ+ rights and runs the school society.
9. He is heavily involved in academic society talks.
10. Studying 4 A level subjects and achieving highly in all 4.

loan often contributes to seminar discussion and is able to articulate his options and thoughts coherently. At times loan's focus on his goal, to design and make, can create a barrier to more contextual thinking but he is actively tackling this through his studies this year. loan listens keenly to his peers' feedback in critiques. During tutorials loan can discuss the development of his own ideas and takes on feedback in a considered way, thoughtfully reflecting and acting in response. loan has demonstrated the ability to work hard to achieve his goals and he has a broad range of interests to support his curiosity in the arts. Fashion is at the centre of his enthusiasm and he works constantly to hone his ideas and take his design work to the next level.

Sara is due to complete the Level 3 T Level. This is equivalent to three A Levels and students will be given an overall grade reflecting this. Sara has successfully completed year one, achieving an interim D grade She is predicted to complete Year 2 with a Pass as a minimum grade.

Sara is an able and enthusiastic student who has improved and achieved consistently in the first-year units. She is currently resitting her year 1 exams to improve on her grade and I expect her to succeed in doing so. Sara displays evidence of a wide range of background reading of secondary sources which she is then able to translate into classwork and future career plan discussions. Sara works very well in practical, clinical scenario-based sessions and always makes positive and knowledge-based decisions. She also has a keen interest in anatomy and physiology and worked to a high standard in the lessons. I have no doubt that she has the academic and problem-solving skills to successfully complete the course she is applying for. When researching the role she initiated and visited a retired worker to gain insight.

Sara organises written work well, plans work effectively to meet set deadlines and actively participates in all lessons and activities. If unsure of what is needed, she has the maturity to ask for guidance and support from teachers. She is a well-liked member of the year group and has a broad social network in college.

Sara has gained valuable experience through work placement in year 1 where staff made a point of contacting tutors to say how well she had worked. For year 2 placement Sara will be working at the Community Hospital supported by the Healthcare Trust. The Trust will also be supporting Sara through the Care Certificate Award ensuring recognition of her knowledge and skills. Sara is able to adapt to different environments quickly and has shown to be able in picking up new practical skills through observation and experience, she is not afraid to raise concerns appropriately when required.

Out of College she works part-time in customer facing roles. This has developed her professional, social and communication skills, all transferrable to her ambition.

Sara has the commitment, drive and attention to detail to achieve from her

learning experiences and opportunities, she has shown the capacity to work to deadlines, time-manage and co-ordinate work commitments with learning. I have no hesitation in recommending her for interview and consideration for your course.