

ANNEX A:

REDEFINING UNCONDITIONAL OFFERS

This is the Annex A
for the insight report
Unconditional offers –
the applicant experience¹.



UCAS



The new unconditional offers definitions

This cycle, we have revisited our definition of unconditional offers to increase the clarity of the definitions and for ease of understanding.

Under previous definitions used in the End of Cycle Report 2018² and ‘Unconditional offers – an update for 2019’³ there were two types of offer which fell under offers with an unconditional component:

- > **Unconditional offer:** Any offer unconditional on 30 June – the final date on which main scheme applications can be submitted.
- > **Conditional unconditional offer:** Offers which are conditional at the point of offer and adjusted by the provider from conditional to unconditional when selected as an applicant’s firm choice. These are identified in the admissions system through free text fields that providers can use to communicate any additional information to applicants. The offer conditions are analysed on 30 June.

These categories reflected previous reporting. However, there are some limitations:

- > **Non – distinct categories:** There is an overlap between the unconditional offer and conditional unconditional offer categories. When a conditional unconditional offer is selected as an applicant’s firm choice it would have also been reported in the unconditional offer category. This means the broader category, offer with an unconditional component – which includes both conditional unconditional offers and unconditional offers, is not the sum of the sub-categories.
- > **Non-homogenous category:** The unconditional offer category is a mixture of offers which were unconditional at the point of offer, and offers which started the cycle as conditional, but which became unconditional at some point before 30 June.
- > **Changing offer conditions:** The offer conditions at 30 June may not be the same as when the applicant initially replied, as providers are able to change offer conditions during the cycle.

We aim to address these limitations with our new offer categories.

As detailed in this report there are now three distinct types of offer which fall within the broad category of unconditional offers:

- > **Conditional unconditional offer:** Offers which are conditional at the point of offer and adjusted by the provider from conditional to unconditional when selected as an applicant’s firm choice. These are identified in the admissions system through free text fields that providers can use to communicate any additional information to applicants. The offer conditions are analysed at the point the applicant replies to the offer, or if this is not available, 30 June.
- > **Direct unconditional offer:** Offers which are unconditional at the first point of offer.
- > **Other unconditional offer:** Offers which are conditional at the point of offer and become unconditional before 30 June – the final date on which main scheme applications can be submitted, but which are not identified as conditional unconditional from offer conditions.

The total of these types of offer are referred to as **offers with an unconditional component**.

Table 1 demonstrates scenarios in which applicants have received different types of **offers with an unconditional component** and how they would be categorised under the new and previous unconditional offer definitions seen in UCAS’ End of Cycle Report 2018.⁴

¹ www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-reports/2018-end-cycle-report

² www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-reports/2018-end-cycle-report

³ www.ucas.com/file/250931/download?token=R8Nn7u0I

⁴ www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-reports/2018-end-cycle-report

	Scenario	Previous Definition(s)	New Definition
1	Applicant receives offer conditions through the UCAS system stating: 'Offer will be converted to unconditional if chosen as firm' and selects the choice as their firm choice.	Conditional Unconditional and Unconditional	Conditional Unconditional
2	Applicant receives offer conditions through the UCAS system stating: 'Offer will be converted to unconditional if chosen as firm' and selects the choice as their insurance choice or declines the offer.	Conditional Unconditional	Conditional Unconditional
3	Applicant receives a conditional offer but upon attending an audition, providing a portfolio, providing proof of qualification, or no applicant action, it is converted to unconditional.	Unconditional	Other Unconditional
4	Applicant received a conditional offer through the UCAS system. However, the provider sends a letter/ email to the applicant stating that the offer will be made unconditional if chosen as firm. The applicant then picks the choice as firm.	Unconditional	Other Unconditional
5	Applicant receives an unconditional offer at the first point of offer which requires no action on their part.	Unconditional	Direct Unconditional

TABLE 1: New and Previous Offer with an unconditional component Definitions.



Understanding Other Unconditional offers

As detailed in the report, we have attempted to estimate the scale of offers in scenario 4 of table 1. That is, the offers which would be classified as conditional unconditional if it were made through the UCAS system – but which cannot be identified as conditional unconditional because the pertinent information is communicated outside the UCAS system, usually via post or email. Here, as in the report, we will refer to these offers as potential conditional unconditional offers.

For each provider, we looked at a subset of offers included in the ‘Other Unconditional’ category, which had been chosen as an applicant’s firm choice before the offer became unconditional.

As these offers would only be changed to unconditional if they had already been selected as an applicant’s firm choice (and not if they were selected as insurance or declined), we identified providers that had made more than 25 such offers⁵ of which a very large proportion – more than 95% – of their offers in the ‘Other Unconditional’ category had been selected as firm before becoming unconditional. This is an indication that these may be potential conditional unconditional offers.

It is important to note, there are potentially other reasons why many of a provider’s other unconditional offers would have changed from conditional to unconditional having been selected as firm – without them being potential conditional unconditional offers. However, by setting a threshold of 95% we can be confident in the accuracy of this classification.

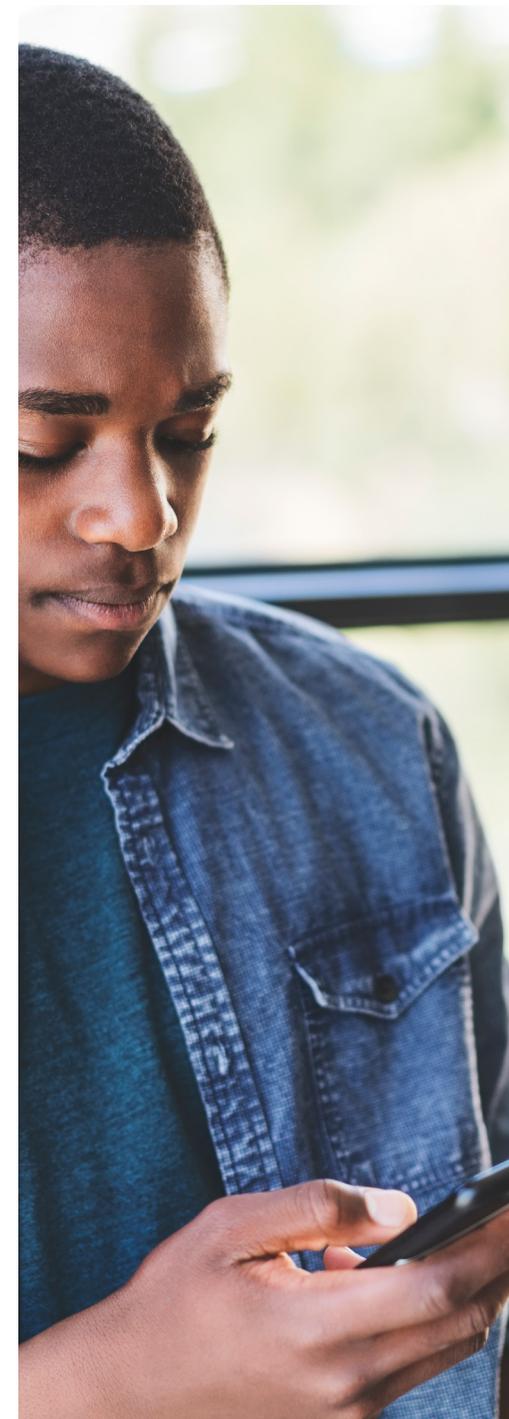
If we only consider other unconditional offers from providers who meet this 95% threshold and only consider those offers which changed from conditional to unconditional after being selected as firm, we find 11,895 (59%) of the other unconditional offers would be classified as potential conditional unconditional offers.

As these would only cover the offers selected as an applicant’s firm choice, we need to account for offers that were selected as an insurance choice, or declined. They would not be included in the 11,895 offers above, as they would not be converted to unconditional by the provider.

We have applied the average proportion of conditional unconditional offers being selected as firm in 2019, 25%, to estimate the total volume of potential conditional unconditional offers. Based on this, we estimate there could be up to 47,500 potential conditional unconditional offers.

We also sense-checked the estimate using survey data. 81% of applicants who chose a potential conditional unconditional offer as their first choice (and who did not also receive a conditional unconditional offer) reported receiving an offer which would be made unconditional if selected as their first choice. This is broadly in line with the 86% of applicants who chose a conditional unconditional offer as their first choice that report the same through UCAS’s surveys.

It is important to note that respondents may not always understand the question or recall that they have received one of these offers. These findings combined suggest that our criteria for identifying potential conditional unconditional offers are unlikely to substantially overestimate the number of these offers made outside the UCAS systems.



⁵ About the minimum number of conditional unconditional offers a provider makes in one cycle.



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