

## The most disrupted and disadvantaged aiming high with university choices

**Strictly embargoed to 00:01, Thursday 28 October 2021**

The number of UK 18 year olds from the most disadvantaged backgrounds applying to the most selective universities and courses has jumped 8% this year. This compares to a 1% rise for students from the most advantaged backgrounds applying by the 15 October application deadline.

The October 15 equal consideration deadline is for anyone wanting to start a course in autumn 2022 at either the University of Oxford or the University of Cambridge, or for most medicine, dentistry, or veterinary courses at any other university. This deadline usually accounts for approximately 10% of the total number of applicants in a cycle. The equal consideration deadline for all other courses, universities and colleges is 26 January 2022.

In total, 77,810 students of all ages and domiciles have applied in total this year, up a modest 1% on last year. The full [15 October deadline application data dashboard is available here](#).

Other key headlines include:

- The number of UK 18 year olds who have applied by the October 15 deadline is up by 3% (39,920 vs 38,580), reflecting the 3% increase in total UK 18 year olds in the population in 2021.
- 3,030 of the most disadvantaged students ([POLAR4 quintile 1](#)) have applied, up 8% from 2,800 last year; with 17,570 of the most advantaged (POLAR4 quintile 5) applying this year compared with 17,410 last year, up by just 1%.
- 29,710 have applied for medicine courses, up 4% from last year's figure of 28,690, and there has been a 28% increase in reapplicants<sup>1</sup> applying for medicine courses this year (5,710 in 2022 vs 4,470 in 2021).
- The total number of international applicants (including EU) has fallen 4% this year (21,820 compared to 22,730 in 2021). This includes a fall of 16% in applicants from the EU (4,370 down from 5,220 in 2021).
- However, demand remains strong from Ireland, with a 15% increase in applicants for 2022 (850 from 740 in 2021).
- The number of international applicants from outside EU remains static this year following 2021's dramatic 20% rise on 2020 (17,460 for 2022 vs 17,510 in 2021 and 14,540 in 2020).

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<sup>1</sup> Applicants who have applied this cycle to medicine courses who have applied in the previous cycle to any course.

- Demand from China continues to be strong, with a 5% increase this year (4,570 this year vs 4,340 for 2021, following a 31% rise from 3,310 in 2020).

**Clare Marchant, UCAS Chief Executive, said:** “It is heartening to see that this cohort of students - some of the hardest hit by the Covid pandemic who didn’t get to sit their GCSE’s and National 5’s, and have had almost two years of disruption to their studies – are being ambitious with their university and college applications. It is particularly pleasing to see a narrowing of the disadvantage gap with 8% more students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds aiming high and applying to the most competitive courses.

“We know that increased demand and the continued rise in the number of 18 year olds in the UK population will put a squeeze on available places, particularly those at the most competitive institutions and on the most competitive courses.

“This year marks another year where examination arrangements will be different. Universities and colleges are used to dealing with a wide range of different qualifications from different educational settings, and whilst this year presents challenges, we are confident in their ability to continue delivering a fair and transparent process. Examinations are only one part of the picture, with admissions professionals looking at the full application to build the picture of their applicant, including potentially additional assessment methods such as interviews.

“Confidence in higher education in the UK remains strong, so I would encourage students to continue to be aspirational, but realistic, and ensure that they have a back up plan so they can remain open to all the opportunities available to them. We know that many applicants, including those applying to the most selective universities and courses, are considering a higher or degree apprenticeship as well as a traditional undergraduate degree as part of the range of options available to them.

“At UCAS, we are ready to support all students with their next steps by providing them with all the information, advice and guidance they need to help them make an informed decision for their future.”

#### **Ends**

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#### **Notes for editors**

UCAS, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, is an independent charity, and the UK's shared admissions service for higher education.

Our services support young people making post-18 choices, as well as mature learners, by providing information, advice, and guidance to inspire and facilitate educational progression to university, college or an apprenticeship. We manage almost three million applications, from around 700,000 people each year, for full-time undergraduate courses at over 380 universities and colleges across the UK.

We also provide a wide range of research, consultancy and advisory services to schools, colleges, careers services, professional bodies and employers, including apprenticeships.

We're a successful and fast-growing organisation, which helps hundreds of thousands of people every year. We're committed to delivering a first-class service to all of our customers — they're at the heart of everything we do.