

ADVISER GUIDE 2026

FOR ENTRY TO UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE IN 2026

An operational guide for all teachers, advisers, and agents who help undergraduate students apply to study in the UK, as a UCAS registered centre.



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ABOUT THIS GUIDE AND HOW TO CONTACT US

This guide is for staff at schools, colleges, and other centres, such as careers offices and agencies, who advise potential applicants to undergraduate higher education (HE) courses in the UK.

It explains how to apply to UK universities and colleges, how UCAS processes applications, how you can manage your students' applications, and the support we provide.

It's essential you keep up-to-date with the latest information and advice on applications for 2026. Please refer to our monthly newsletters and www.ucas.com/advisers. You can also sign up to receive the latest news straight to your inbox at www.ucas.com/adviser-updates.

If your school or college has not had previous contact with us (for example, you are a newly created sixth form), you can find information about becoming a UCAS registered centre at www.ucas.com/becomeacentre. Once we've reviewed your application and it's successful, we'll let you know when you can access the adviser portal.

Other types of organisations and independent advisers / counsellors outside of schools or colleges, can apply to become a UCAS registered centre.

If you need to contact us about any aspect of the application process, our dedicated Adviser Help Team for UCAS registered centres is here to help (Monday to Friday, 08:00 –18:00 (UK time):

- ▶ Phone from the UK – **0345 123 8001***
- ▶ Phone from outside the UK – **+44 330 333 0239** (international call rates apply)
- ▶ Email – **adviserhelp@ucas.ac.uk**

If you have hearing difficulties, you can contact our Customer Experience Centre, using the text relay service:

- ▶ Phone from the UK – **18001 0371 468 0 468***
- ▶ Phone from outside the UK – **+44 151 494 1260** (text phone) and ask the operator to dial **0371 468 0 468**

* Calls will be charged at your standard network rate.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A UCAS REGISTERED CENTRE

This guide, together with the [adviser portal terms of service](#), form your agreement with UCAS to operate as a UCAS registered centre and use the adviser portal. It's essential that you read this and share with colleagues supporting the UCAS application process in your school, college or centre.

With regular staff changes within registered centres each year, the individual setting up your organisation for the new cycle (e.g. UCAS registered centre correspondent) will confirm they agree to the adviser portal terms of service, which incorporates this Adviser Guide, on your organisation's behalf. This forms part of the annual setting up process for a registered centre to be able to manage applications.

Your key responsibilities as a UCAS registered centre are as follows:

- ▶ Understand the UCAS Undergraduate application process, and associated UCAS business rules, such as results embargoes dates and deadlines, and UCAS terminology outlined in this guide.
- ▶ Signpost your students to advice and guidance about the UCAS process.
- ▶ Keep up-to-date with changes and advances in UK higher education admissions policy, UCAS' developments, and operational updates – we'll send these to you by email.

Please see our 'Stay up-to-date' section for information.

- ▶ Manage your centre's undergraduate applications through the adviser portal.
- ▶ Send completed applications to UCAS for processing by the appropriate equal consideration dates.
 - The October equal consideration date is for applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, as well as for courses in medicine, veterinary medicine / science and dentistry.
 - The January equal consideration date is the date by which students have to submit an application if they want guaranteed consideration by universities or colleges. Any application submitted after this date may not be considered.

As part of managing your centre's undergraduate applications through the adviser portal, you will be required to:

- monitor, check, advise, and approve student applications linked to your centre
- identify relevant referees for each applicant and approve references
- ensure predicted grades and a reference are added to every application
- provide agreement for students who have shared that they are or have been in receipt of Free School Meals in the last six years (UK applicants only)
- check qualifications entered by your students are as complete and accurate as possible and tick the 'Qualifications checked' box if you have checked students' qualifications. Leave it blank if you have not checked them

- set a shortlist of qualifications and keep this up-to-date – it will help your students enter the correct qualifications in the application
- set relevant permissions for your staff and colleagues to access the adviser portal / applications
- set appropriate application fee payment methods for your students and follow our payments and billing process

Ensure you and all staff members comply with data protection and information security best practice, set out in the [UCAS adviser portal terms of service](#) and this guide, which includes:

- ▶ ensuring the named UCAS registered centre correspondent contact details are up-to-date. Please inform us as soon as possible if this key contact needs to change
- ▶ informing UCAS immediately if you become aware of a security incident at your centre which has, or is likely to, impact on UCAS systems
- ▶ ensuring each member of staff registers with an individual email address associated with the official domain of the school, college or centre
- ▶ reminding staff and colleagues they should not share sign in details. If a member of staff requires access to the system, they must be set up as a user in their own right

Please read our complete guidance in [Annex A](#) Data Protection and Information security.

Our [adviser portal guidance](#) will help you with the above.



STAYING UP-TO-DATE WITH CHANGES

2026 CHANGES

► **Application fee of £28.95:** For the 2026 cycle, the UCAS Undergraduate and UCAS Conservatoires application fee is increasing to £28.95. This single application fee enables students to add five choices to their application and use additional services should they need to.

► **Personal statement reform:** Personal statements are changing from one longer piece of text to three scaffolded questions to help shape the focus for students' answers. Each question has a minimum character count of 350 characters.

The questions (listed below) ensure students from all backgrounds better understand the key information universities and colleges want to know about them when making admissions decisions and were chosen following extensive research and validation with students, teachers, advisers, and universities and colleges.

- **Why do you want to study this course or subject?:** This is the opportunity for students to showcase their passion and knowledge of their chosen subject area, and to demonstrate to universities and colleges why it's a good fit for them and their future ambitions.
- **How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?:** This is the chance for students to demonstrate relevant or transferable skills gained from education and highlight their understanding of how it will help them succeed in this subject area.

- **What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences helpful?:** This is the student's chance to talk about any other activities they have undertaken outside of their education or personal experiences which further demonstrate their suitability for the course. This section is likely to be highly personal to them and anything they do include they should reflect on why they're including it.

We will update the personal statement builder, available through the UCAS Hub, to reflect the changes. A range of tools are available on ucas.com including subject guides, factsheets, and [classroom resources](#).

- **January equal consideration date (ECD):** Recent UCAS data highlights that some applicants are experiencing delays in receiving decisions. We expect the adjustment to pre-pandemic norms will reduce the number affected during the critical pre-exam period.
 - The January equal consideration date will be Wednesday 14 January 2026, keeping the mid-week scheduling to avoid conflicts with weekends.
 - UCAS is reintroducing the 31 March 2026 provider advisory decision date and associated decline by default date (DBD) of 6 May 2026 to encourage earlier decision-making.
 - The reject by default deadline (RBD) is set for 13 May 2026.
 - View all the key dates at www.ucas.com/key-dates-timeline.

Looking ahead, UCAS will continue to review cycle dates and deadlines, with details for the 2027 cycle to be shared no later than December 2025.

- **Conservatoires reference:** From the 2026 admissions cycle, UCAS Conservatoires applicants will no longer be required to provide two references. Instead, they must submit contact details for one referee, who will only be contacted if additional information is needed to support the conservatoire's decision-making process. This change aims to reduce administrative burden for both applicants and referees, while streamlining the application process. See our [guidance](#) if you've been asked to be a referee for a UCAS Conservatoires applicant.

Conservatoires will continue to receive contextual data on applicants through standard processes. Applicants are encouraged to contact admissions teams regarding any circumstances that may impact their education, performance, or audition, or to request necessary accommodations.

- **Free School Meals application fee waiver:**
 - We're introducing a new application fee payment option that can be utilised alongside current options, ensuring you can manage what students see on the payment page to suit your centre.
 - The Free Schools Meals waiver payment option will only be visible to students who have indicated their eligibility by selecting 'yes' to the FSM question in 'More about you' (UK applicants only).

- Please read the [full eligibility guidance and FAQs](#).

All 2026 application changes will be reflected in the adviser portal.

For full details of these 2026 application changes, please go to the 2026 adviser toolkit at www.ucas.com/2026-cycle-toolkit.



CONNECT WITH US

ucas.com

We have a dedicated section for advisers on our website at www.ucas.com/advisers. Here you'll find all our latest news, events, advice, and resources to help you through the whole application cycle.

Newsletters

As a registered centre and user of our adviser portal, it's essential you stay up-to-date with developments and operational updates, as well as key changes and advances in the higher education sector. Our newsletters provide you with all the information you need. Whether you're an experienced or new adviser, it's important you take time to read them. Ensure all colleagues supporting the process also sign up to receive these at www.ucas.com/adviser-updates.

Your students and their parents can also sign up for tailored updates at www.ucas.com/get-updates-ucas. They'll get all the latest information, reminders and events details, straight to their inboxes!

UCAS' social media channels

Active on X, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok? Stay in the loop by connecting with us @ucas_online. You can also follow us on LinkedIn: [UCAS for advisers](#).

Adviser news

Our adviser newsfeed gives you timely, relevant updates to support you in your role. For the latest adviser news, visit www.ucas.com/adviser-news.

Adviser Lives

Joined by experts from across the sector, our webinars have been created to help you in your role. Register for upcoming webinars and watch playbacks of any you've missed at www.ucas.com/adviser-lives.

The UCAS widget

The UCAS widget has been designed to be hosted on your school or college's website or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), to link your students and their parents to key information. Find out more at www.ucas.com/widget.

TRAINING AND CONFERENCES FOR ADVISERS

There are a number of dedicated events, conferences, and professional development sessions for teachers and advisers right across the year – everything needed to help you help your students.

NEW – UCAS registered centre training

Our one-day, in person, Adviser Fundamentals course, is designed for teachers and advisers who are new to their role. Join us at UCAS' Cheltenham HQ for a full day of expert support and practical guidance. For full details please see www.ucas.com/training.

Online training

Online on-demand training courses are a great way to embed information about UCAS adviser tools and processes. Learn in your own time, through bite-size units to expand your understanding of the UCAS admissions process. Log in to ucas.com then either click through from the adviser portal or go direct to <https://pdp.ucas.com>. Then click the Adviser button to begin your learning journey.

Need further support?

We can work with you to design personalised training sessions specific to your needs – for you, your team, or centre.

Training is primarily delivered digitally, including facilitated Q&A, focused workshops, or interactive activity.

We can also explore options for those schools and colleges seeking on-site training for their staff.

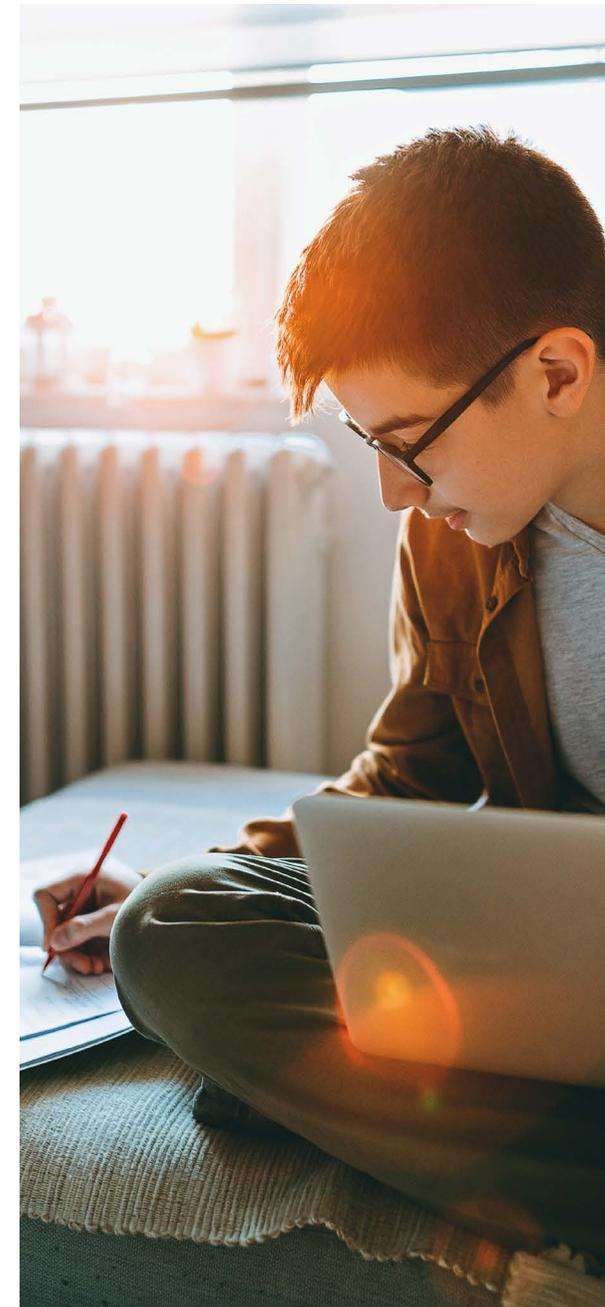
Visit www.ucas.com/training for the most up-to-date information.

Conferences

Our popular UCAS adviser conferences run throughout the year, and provide a unique opportunity to:

- speak with representatives from UK universities and other relevant organisations, to gain first-hand insight and advice on how you can help your students
- hear from the education sector's leading experts – including admissions and student recruitment specialists
- learn about upcoming changes to the education landscape, and the impact on students applying to university or college
- discover how to best prepare your students for their next steps

Visit www.ucas.com/ucas-events-advisers for more information.



2026 ENTRY KEY DATES

29 April 2025	UCAS' search tool displays 2026 courses.
6 May 2025	The adviser portal opens for 2026 entry. From this date, you can set up your adviser portal ready for your students to link to your centre.
13 May 2025	Undergraduate applications open for 2026 entry. From this date, applicants can start their applications and send them to you for references and approval.
10 July 2025	Conservatoire applications open for 2026 entry. From this date, applicants can register, pay for, and send their applications to UCAS.
2 September 2025	Completed undergraduate applications can be submitted to UCAS.
2 October 2025 18:00 (UK time)	Application deadline for conservatoire music applications. Applications for dance, drama, and musical theatre courses may have a different deadline – check conservatoires' websites for information.
15 October 2025 18:00 (UK time)	Equal consideration date for applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and for most courses in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine / science. The reference must be completed before the application can be sent to us.
14 January 2026 18:00 (UK time)	Equal consideration date for applications for most undergraduate courses. The reference must be completed before the application can be sent to us. Deadline for most conservatoire undergraduate dance, drama or musical theatre courses. Check on the specific course to be sure.
26 February 2026	Extra opens – applicants who have used all five choices and are not holding any offers may be able to add another choice in their application.
31 March 2026	UCAS provider advisory decision date – universities and colleges should aim to have sent all decisions on applications received at UCAS by 14 January.
30 June 2026 18:00 (UK time)	Applications received by this date will be sent to universities and colleges. After this time, applications are automatically entered into Clearing.
4 July 2026	Last date to add an Extra choice in their application.
5 July 2026	Clearing opens for eligible applicants, and vacancies are displayed in UCAS' search tool. Applicants can release themselves into Clearing.

View all the key dates you and your students need to know at www.ucas.com/key-dates-timeline.



FREE SCHOOL MEALS APPLICATION FEE WAIVER

WHAT IS THE FREE SCHOOL MEALS APPLICATION FEE WAIVER?

UCAS will waive the application fee for any student who is / or has been in receipt of free school meals (FSM) at some point during the previous six years, up until the end of their final year at school or college. This is only applicable for students who are domiciled in the UK and applying through a UCAS registered centre.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO HAVE THE APPLICATION FEE WAIVED?

1. Students who are currently enrolled at a school or college in the UK and have been in receipt of free school meals at some point during the previous six years will be eligible to have the application fee waived.
2. Students applying from the independent school sector can indicate their financial circumstances would have made them eligible for free school meals in the past six years. This can be verified by teachers / advisers using confirmation through the student's previous school or college, a letter of confirmation from the local authority, or using the Bursary Assessment Associates contextualised data service.
3. Students who are not currently enrolled at a school or college, but who are applying through a registered centre and can demonstrate to the centre they have been in receipt of free school meals at some point during the last six years, are eligible to have the application fee waived.

ACTION REQUIRED

Please read the [Eligibility guidance and FAQs](#) available to support you. There is a step-by-step guide to help you.

YOUR GUIDE TO THE PROCESS FOR 2026 ENTRY

For the FSM application fee waiver to be applied students will need to:

1. Share they are in receipt of free school meals in the 'More about you' section of the application.
2. Choose the 'Apply with FSM fee waiver' option when they 'Pay and submit' their application.

ACTION REQUIRED CHECK YOUR 'APPLICATION FEE PAYMENT METHOD' IN THE ADVISER PORTAL

- This is where you can ensure eligible students do not miss out on the waiver. For us to apply an application fee waiver to eligible applicants, you need to enable the new FSM waiver option. This can be used alongside the current payment method options to suit your centre. The application fee payment method you choose will determine what your linked students see when they pay and submit their applications.
- The FSM waiver option will only be visible to students who have indicated their eligibility by selecting 'yes' to the FSM question in 'More about you'.

- Your centre will not be invoiced for eligible FSM students that you provide agreement for in the adviser portal.

CHECKS TO BE UNDERTAKEN BEFORE AN APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED TO UCAS

Use the FSM filters in application management to help you identify students' answers to the FSM question.

1. If an applicant has incorrectly chosen 'Apply with FSM fee waiver' you can return the application to the student to ensure they pay by card before you send it to UCAS.
2. The 'payment option' column in application management enables you to check the payment option used by the student. Note, FSM students will be identified as 'invoice'.
3. **If an applicant who is eligible for FSM waiver has chosen to 'Pay by card' you will not be given the opportunity to agree eligibility. It's essential that students who might be eligible for the FSM application fee waiver do not enter any card details. Once you pay by card (even if eligible), this cannot be reversed; an application fee waiver cannot be applied after the pay and submit process has been completed.**

HOW IS THE INFORMATION ABOUT FREE SCHOOL MEALS USED BY UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES?

Adviser agreement of FSM status is not shared with universities and colleges and will only be used by UCAS to support the FSM fee waiver scheme.

Self-declared answers in the 'More about you' section of the application are securely shared with those who are responsible for putting support in place at university or college, and this information is treated sensitively.

Knowing about the applicant's circumstances may also help admissions staff take their achievements into account and gain a better understanding of their achievements and potential in context. They may be able to offer additional support during their studies (e.g. through a scholarship or bursary scheme), or events or activities to help them prepare for higher education. Information about an applicant's circumstances is not used to decide whether to make them an offer, but some universities and colleges may use this to make them a contextual offer. For more information visit wwwucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/contextual-admissions.

The information an applicant provides in their UCAS application may also be used anonymously for monitoring purposes. This may inform and improve the support provided by universities and colleges to their students in the future. The data is kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 – read our [privacy policy](#).

[Eligibility guidance and FAQs are available to support you.](#)

Students who have been in receipt of FSM and are making a **UCAS Conservatoires application** will be contacted directly via email with further instructions when they declare they are in receipt of free school meals in the 'More about you' section of their application.

SUMMARY OF PAYMENTS AND BILLING PROCESS

A payment is required for applications processed through UCAS. Applicants are charged £28.95 for their application. As a registered centre, you can decide the payment method in the adviser portal, under 'Centre management'. This can be changed at any point during the cycle.

Please note: The FSM application fee waiver can only be applied to eligible applicants who share they are, or have been, in receipt of free school meals in the 'More about you' section and where agreement is provided in the adviser portal (UK applicants only).

The application fee payment options (that show to students) may be changed at any point during the cycle if the chosen payment method is not working for the centre or students.

– **Invoice only** – UCAS' Finance department will send an invoice* at the end of each calendar month, identifying applicants whose applications you have submitted. Your centre will not be invoiced for eligible FSM students who you provide agreement for in the adviser portal. An invoice will be issued for students without a FSM application fee waiver agreement in the adviser portal. There are warnings in place to highlight you will be invoiced. You can return the application to the student to update their payment before you submit to UCAS to avoid being invoiced. It's at the discretion of the centre if you decide to recover payment directly from applicants. **Applicants should not send payments directly to UCAS.**

– **Pay by card** – applicants will be presented with the option to pay online by credit or debit card. You can also combine this option with the free school meal application waiver. **Once a student (even if eligible) pays by card this cannot be reversed and an application fee waiver cannot be applied.**

– **Hybrid** – applicants will be presented with the option to choose to pay by card or for the centre to receive an invoice*. You can also combine this option with the free school meal application fee waiver option. The centre is responsible for payment of invoice(s). Your centre will not be invoiced for eligible FSM students who you provide agreement for in the adviser portal. Invoices* will be issued at the end of each calendar month for students without a FSM application fee waiver agreement in the adviser portal who have chosen 'Apply with fee waiver' or 'invoice', and you have sent to UCAS. There are warnings in place to highlight you will be invoiced.

– **NEW Free school meals (FSM) fee waiver – UK domiciled applicants only.** If you enable this option, it will only be presented to students who have identified 'yes' to the FSM question in the application. This option will be presented to those students along with one of the options you've chosen above. You will need to provide agreement via the adviser portal for the application fee to be waived. If you do not enable this option, applicants will not be given the fee waiver option when they 'Pay and submit'.

***Invoices are sent by email to the listed finance contact and copied to the registered centre correspondent. You have 30 days to pay.**

It's essential we have an up-to-date central finance contact e.g finance@payables.yourschool.ac.uk NOT a named individual. If you need to change this or have any queries relating to finance, please contact receivables@ucas.ac.uk.

How to set your application fee payment method is outlined in our [adviser portal guidance](#) and our [FSM step-by-step guide](#) – please read this guidance.

IMPORTANT:

Once a centre has sent an application to UCAS:

- the application cannot be returned to the student
- the payment option cannot be changed
- the fee waiver cannot be retrospectively waived
- students who pay by card accidentally cannot have the application fee waiver applied retrospectively.

Centre and reference details

Contacts

Centre linking (buzzword)

Qualification shortlist

Groups

Application fee payment methods

Referee contact details

Reference template

Select an application fee payment option

Payment is required for undergraduate applications. Choose how you would like students to pay for their application fee in the 'pay and review' section of the application:

Invoice only - UCAS will send your centre a monthly invoice for any submitted applications.

Card - Applicants will be presented with the option to pay online by credit or debit card. You can also combine this option with the free school meals fee waiver, below.

Hybrid - Applicants will be presented with the option to choose to pay by card or for the centre to receive an invoice. You can also combine this option with the free school meals fee waiver, below. The centre is responsible for payment of invoice(s) for any submitted applications.

The centre is responsible for payment of invoice(s). It's at the discretion of the centre if you decide to recover payment directly from applicants (applicants should not send payments directly to UCAS).

Free school meals fee waiver

UK domiciled applicants only

This option will ONLY be presented to students who have identified 'yes' to the Free School Meals (FSM) question in the application. [Find out more about the free school meals fee waiver.](#)

This option will be presented to those students along with any of the options you've chosen above. You will need to provide agreement via the Adviser Portal for the application fee to be waived.

If you do not select this option, applicants will not be given the fee waiver option. UCAS will be waiving the undergraduate application fee for any student who is/ or has been in receipt of free school meals (FSM) at some point during the last six years, up until the end of their final year at school or college. This is only applicable for students who are domiciled in the UK.

Free school meals fee waiver

Save Cancel

SECTION 1: SUPPORTING STUDENT DISCOVERY



SECTION 1: SUPPORTING STUDENT DISCOVERY

1.1 PREPARING STUDENTS

We have some great ideas and resources for classroom activities with your students – highlighting essential information and helping them refine their choices to make informed decisions. Visit www.ucas.com/advisers/guides for more information.

TOP TIP

Don't forget, the [2026 cycle toolkit](#) has everything you need to prepare – download your support materials today!

The UCAS Hub

Get your students thinking about their future with the UCAS Hub before they apply.

The UCAS Hub provides your students with all the tools and information they need to start thinking about their next steps. From exploring subjects or considering apprenticeships. Have a go at subject tasters or virtual work experiences. Take a quiz to help with careers ideas or

shortlisting future ideas – it has everything they need in one place – for free. Register now to make the most of all the tools at www.ucas.com/hub.

The adviser portal can also help you keep up-to-date with your students' research activity under the Student Hub Activity tile.

Find out what the Hub has to offer your students in our guide for advisers at www.ucas.com/hub-adviser.

Browse thousands of courses in our search tool

Our search tool has over 30,000 courses at approximately 350 higher education providers in the UK. This mobile-friendly tool enables students to shortlist courses, and access all undergraduate, postgraduate, and conservatoire courses in one search tool, as well as explore apprenticeship opportunities and chat to current students.

Visit the UCAS search tool at www.ucas.com/search.

Subject Spotlights and Virtual Work Experiences

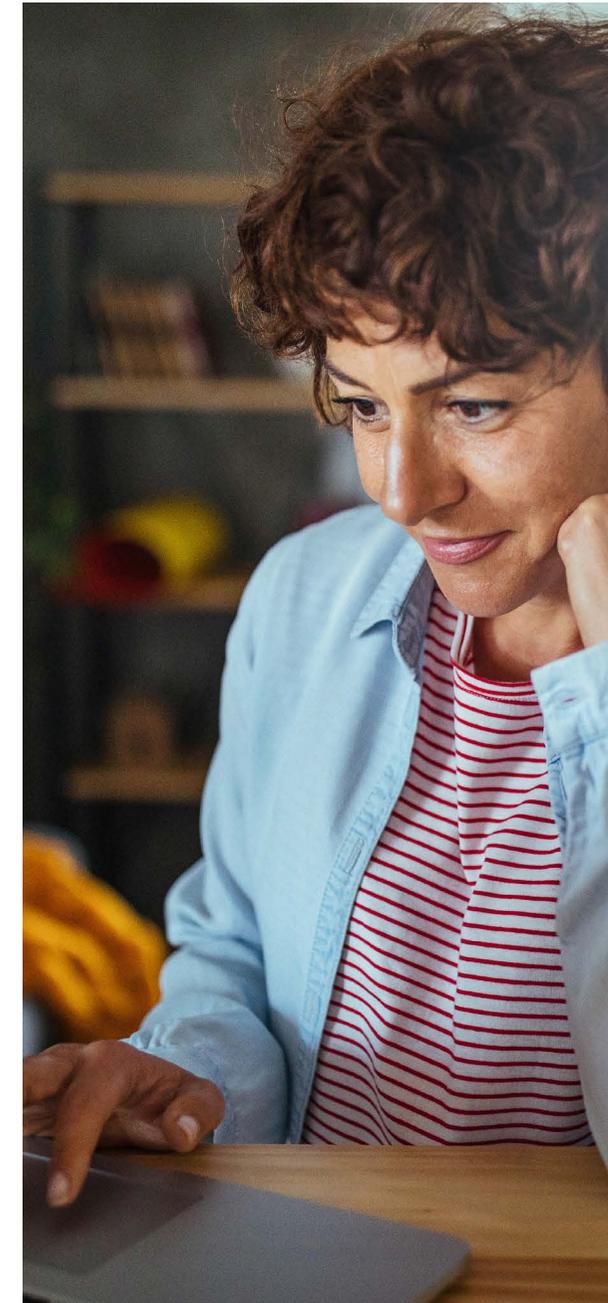
Subject Spotlights from Springpod give students the chance to explore, interact with and sample university subjects and courses online for the first time, before they apply.

Led by industry experts from the world's leading employers, Virtual Work Experiences give a taste of what a career would look like through interactive, on-demand programmes.

Help students explore their options and find out more at www.ucas.com/advisers/help-and-training/springpod.

Chat to uni students

We know the value peer-to-peer conversations have, so we've teamed up with Unibuddy to give your students the chance to talk to current undergraduates about their first-hand experiences. They can find out what studying a particular course and life at uni is really like at www.ucas.com/chat-to-students.



UCAS DISCOVERY UK TOUR

UCAS Discovery exhibitions give students the chance to meet hundreds of universities, colleges, and employers face-to-face – all under one roof. Attend live Q&A talks with subject and industry experts and get the latest advice and information on applications and career choices.

Find out more at www.ucas.com/discovery

94% OF ATTENDEES

IN 2024 FOUND A UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE OR EMPLOYER THEY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN APPLYING TO.

GET OUT THERE – OPEN DAYS!

To help your students decide, encourage them to attend open days. They're a great opportunity to ask questions face-to-face with potential future tutors and fellow students, and a chance to get a taste of what it would be like studying at a university or college.

Find open days using our search tool at www.ucas.com/open-days.

If your students can't attend an open day, a university or college virtual tour might be a good alternative. Although nothing beats seeing it for themselves, virtual tours give an idea of the facilities. These are especially helpful for international students. You can find a list at www.ucas.com/virtual-tours.

UCAS outreach connection service

Many universities and colleges offer activities such as short taster courses or summer schools, giving students experience of academic and social life in a higher education environment. Our outreach connection service is available in the adviser portal so you can connect your students with relevant support throughout their discovery journey. These could include summer schools, mentoring programmes, academic support and much more. Find out more at www.ucas.com/advisers/outreach.

UK applicants are asked if they've participated in such activities in the 'Extra activities' section of their application.

One student commented:

Summer school was the sole reason I went to uni – if I hadn't gone, I definitely wouldn't be doing mental health nursing now. It gave me a taste of what uni is like. It also gave me a clear career plan – I made sure I redid my maths GCSE, so I could get in, and get the A level grades I needed.

Information for international students

- ▶ UCAS information and advice for international and EU students: www.ucas.com/international.
- ▶ British Council: study-uk.britishcouncil.org.

Other useful resources and websites

- ▶ Information about higher and degree apprenticeships: www.ucas.com/understanding-apprenticeships.
- ▶ National Careers Service (England): nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk.
- ▶ My World of Work (Scotland): www.myworldofwork.co.uk.
- ▶ Careers Service (Northern Ireland): www.nidirect.gov.uk.
- ▶ Careers Wales: www.careerswales.com.
- ▶ Prospects: www.prospects.ac.uk – what students can do with their degrees.
- ▶ University league tables rank universities and colleges – it's important to check their weighting and methodology to understand their bias. The Times Online at www.timeshighereducation.com, and Complete University Guide at www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk, are interactive sites. Users can highlight their requirements and create their own unique table.
- ▶ UCAS' Careers Quiz is to help your students find their ideal job matched to their personality, and a list of courses previous students studied to get there: www.ucas.com/careers-quiz



1.2 RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

The best place for parents and guardians to get the support they need is www.ucas.com/parents. Here they'll have access to a wide range of guidance and resources, all designed to help them through the different stages of the application process:

- ▶ **Parent videos** – for advice, hints, and useful tips.
- ▶ **Parent newsletters** – all the updates and information they need, along with timely explanations of the application process. Parents and guardians can sign up at www.ucas.com/parents-signup.

We'd encourage you to promote these resources through your parent portal, at school or college events, or on your website, to help your students' parents and guardians easily access the information they need.



One parent told us:

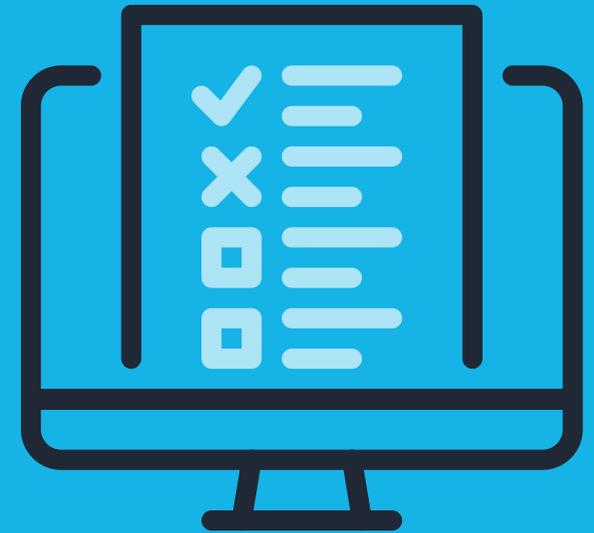
I wasn't sure how to help my son access an application to university and knew that UCAS had something to do with it. When I found the parent newsletter, it was brilliant, and I signed up to make sure I was helping him the best way I could.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the 'Personal details' section of the application, **applicants can nominate a parent, guardian, teacher, adviser, or carer to contact UCAS on their behalf**, if they can't phone themselves. Subject to security checks, we can then discuss an individual's application with their 'nominated access' named person.



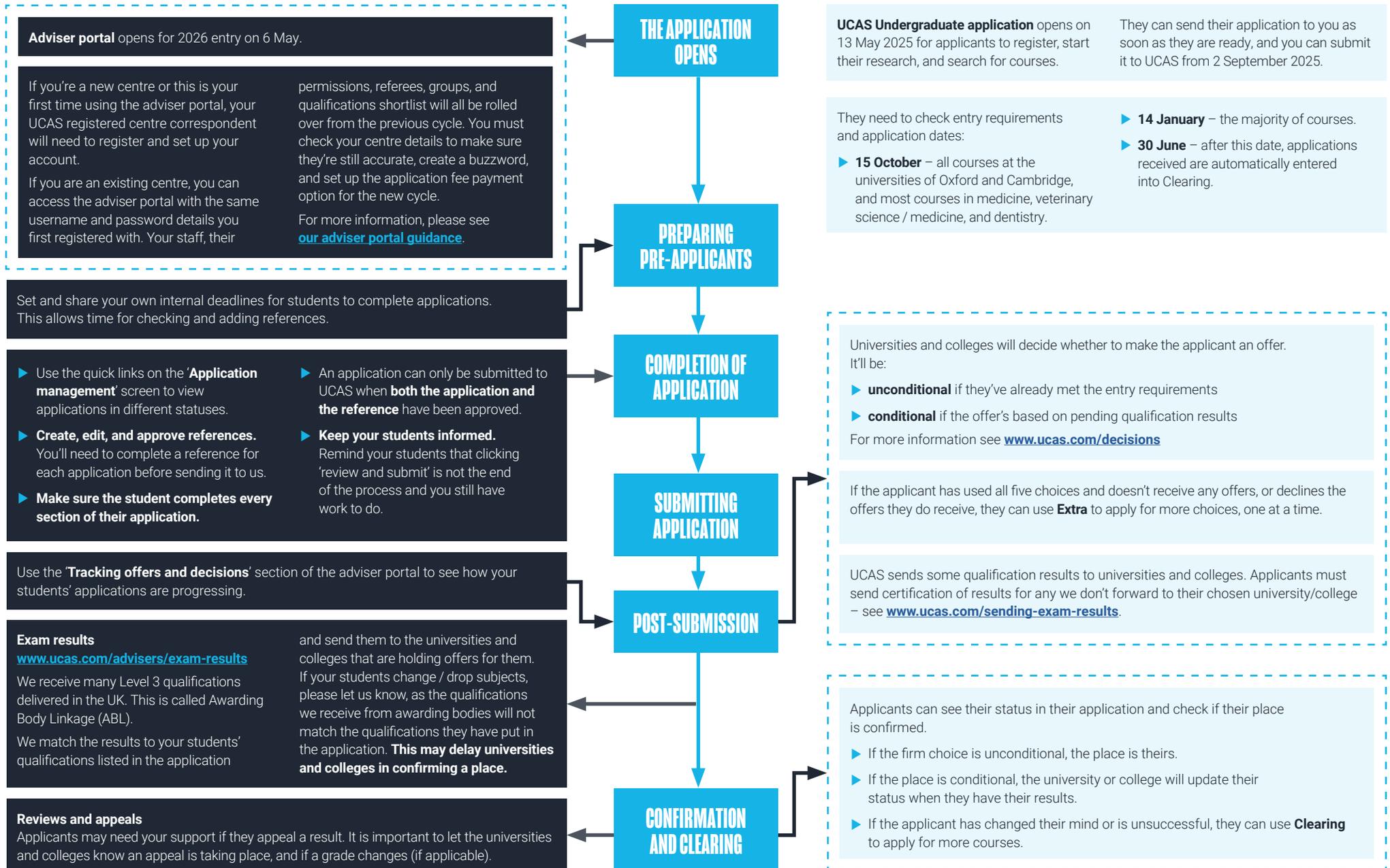
SECTION 2: THE APPLICATION



ADVISERS

JOURNEY OF AN APPLICATION

APPLICANTS



2.1 APPLICATION OVERVIEW

Once all the sections of the application have been marked as complete by a student, including payment, it is submitted to the centre to review, and add a reference and predicted grades. It can be returned to the student to amend, if required. Before it can be submitted to UCAS, both the status of the application and the status of the reference has to be approved by the centre.

When to apply

Before looking in detail at the application, it's important to know when to apply. Applicants can submit their applications to you for approval from 13 May, and you can submit their applications to UCAS from 2 September.

There are three application deadlines to be aware of – please refer to **the key dates on page 7** for full details of these. You may want to set your own internal deadlines.

15 October	All applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge must be submitted by this date, as well as most applications to medicine, veterinary science / medicine, and dentistry courses.
14 January	Equal consideration date – applications submitted by this time must be considered equally by universities and colleges.
30 June	New applications must be submitted by this time – after this, applications are entered directly into Clearing.

If you aren't sure which deadline applies, you can find the deadline for each course in our [search tool](#).

Centres submit applications to UCAS on behalf of students linked to them. Applications can be sent before students have completed their qualifications and received results. Offers from universities and colleges may be conditional, potentially based on qualification results to be achieved. Referees are expected to provide predicted grades for the qualifications their students are studying, so universities and colleges have an idea of their expected result.

Late applications

Universities and colleges give equal consideration to all applications received by the relevant application date. They may consider applications received after this date if they still have vacancies, but they don't have to. They can also close courses after the relevant date has passed if they don't want to receive any more applications. A quick check in the [UCAS search tool](#) is the first step in choosing a course, to see if there are vacancies.

TOP TIP

Most admissions tests are sat at the start of the academic cycle, so applicants need to register as soon as possible. Find out more at www.ucas.com/admissions-tests.



International students

Applicants who submit their application by 18:00 (UK time) on the relevant date are guaranteed equal consideration by universities and colleges. Many consider applications submitted by international applicants after the published dates – students should check with universities and colleges. It's important to remember that most UK students will make their applications well before the relevant date, and some popular courses might not have places available after that.

Deferred entry

Students who take a gap year, including national service, can apply during the 2026 entry cycle, to start a course in 2027. This is called deferred entry.

The 'rules' are the same for applicants starting their courses in this cycle, and they'll need to:

- ▶ apply by the same application dates
- ▶ choose a start date of 2027 when they add their course choice
- ▶ meet the conditions of their offer by 3 September 2026, unless a different date is specified by the university or college

Before applying, students should contact universities or colleges to check they consider deferred applications. For some courses, they may not – for example, the course may not be offered the following year, or they may only consider applicants who have not had a break in study.



2.2 FIRST STOP – THE APPLICATION SECTIONS

How to apply

Your students need to register an account with UCAS. Once they've done this, they'll be able to begin completing the application from 13 May. On-screen help will guide them through it.

Students can access their application anywhere that has secure internet access. They can change and save their application details as often as necessary, before submitting the final version to your centre. If your students are using a shared computer in a classroom, library, or IT suite, remind them to sign out of their application, to avoid another user mistakenly signing in to the wrong application, or seeing personal data.

KEY RESOURCE

Every year we produce a step-by-step guide to applying through UCAS – it's packed full of screenshots for you to copy and paste into your own materials to support your students. [Download](#) it now and save time!

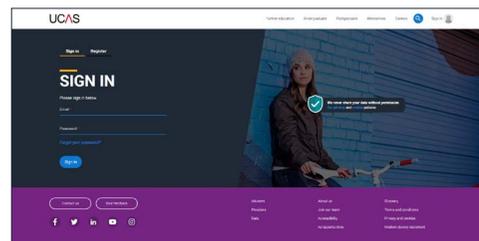
TOP TIP

We recommend students use a personal email address so they can get updates from UCAS and their university and college choices all year round.



Students complete a profile, including the following sections:

- ▶ Personal details
- ▶ Nationality details
- ▶ Where you live
- ▶ Contact details
- ▶ Supporting information
- ▶ Finance & funding
- ▶ Diversity & inclusion (UK applicants only)
- ▶ More about you
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Employment
- ▶ Extra activities (UK applicants only)
- ▶ Personal statement
- ▶ Choices



UCAS buzzword

Applicants who apply through a UCAS registered centre need a buzzword to automatically link them to their centre. All students linked to centres can be viewed in the adviser portal. The buzzword is a unique word which centres set up in the adviser portal at the start of the cycle (it can be changed at any time throughout the cycle).

Students enter the buzzword at the start of the application and can choose a group to be assigned to (set up by the centre in the adviser portal).

If a student forgets to use the buzzword, and starts an independent application, they can change this in the 'Application status' section at the top of the application. Centres will need to approve these requests to link in centre management.

If groups have not been set up (by the UCAS registered centre correspondent), the student will automatically be listed in your centre's 'Default' group list. Students can be changed from one group to another – see [our adviser portal guidance](#).

Registered centre users should not sign in as applicants or ask applicants to share their password details. Advisers should only use the adviser portal to access applications.

Former students

Former students can apply as independent applicants and request a reference only from your centre. They'll need the buzzword to request one, but they won't be linked to your centre, and you won't be able to track, check or send their application – you'll just provide a

reference. It's the student's responsibility to send their application to UCAS if you're providing a reference only.

If a former student wishes to link their full application to your centre, they'll need your buzzword. Accepting a full application link means you're agreeing to approve their application, write and attach a reference, and submit their application to UCAS once all sections are complete.

Use the 'Waiting to link to centre' quick link in the adviser portal to easily see students waiting to link. We tell you if they're requesting to link their full application or reference only, so you can check it's right before accepting them.

Find out more about the full process to support former students at www.ucas.com/linking-applications-your-centre-adviser-portal.

TOP TIP

We recommend you create and name a group 'Former students' to easily identify them from your current students.



Acknowledgement emails

We send applicants an automated acknowledgement email after:

- ▶ they have completed all sections of their application, and submitted it to their centre
- ▶ the centre has returned the application to the student for amendment
- ▶ the reference has been added to the application and it has been received at UCAS

We also send emails to applicants at various stages of their application journey.

Contact details should be kept up-to-date, and **a personal email address used** rather than a school or college one, to make sure they receive important information.

Number of choices

Each student can make a maximum of five choices on their application, including:

- ▶ no more than four choices to any one of medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, or veterinary science
- ▶ no more than one course at either the University of Oxford or the University of Cambridge. The exception to this is if the applicant will be a graduate at the start of the course, and they're applying for graduate medicine at the University of Cambridge. In this case, they can also apply for medicine at Cambridge, in addition to being able to apply to graduate medicine at the University of Oxford. No other combinations are permitted

IMPORTANT

Choices can be added to an application after it's been sent to UCAS. If all five choices haven't been used, additional choices can be added later (if the applicant hasn't replied to their offers). Students should check the equal consideration date for the course. If a choice is added after the equal consideration date, it won't be guaranteed consideration.

Invisibility of choices

We send applications to each of the chosen universities and colleges at the same time. Each university or college only has access to the information about its choice. They must not ask applicants, or the person the applicant has nominated to have access to their application, to reveal their other choices. **This is what we call invisibility.**

Only much later in the application cycle, when an applicant has received decisions on all their choices and replied to any offers, will each university or college be able to see details of the other choices. This ensures each university or college decides independently whether to offer a place, and what conditions, if any, to attach to an offer.

It's very important that confidentiality is maintained on course and university and college choices until each offer has been responded to by the applicant. Advisers must ensure this confidentiality is not broken.

DID YOU KNOW?

Choices aren't sent in preference order – we send an application to all universities and colleges at the same time. They don't know where else your student has applied, and the order choices are displayed in the application doesn't relate to a preference order.



COMPLETING THE EDUCATION SECTION

Why is the education section so important?

It's one of the most crucial – and often error-prone – parts of the process. While it might seem straightforward, inaccuracies here can have significant consequences for applicants.

The education section is often the starting point for universities and colleges when assessing applications. It provides key information about qualifications, helping them decide whether students meet their requirements. Errors in this section can lead to:

- ▶ applicants being made unsuccessful decisions unnecessarily
- ▶ offers being made that the applicant cannot meet

Accurate and complete information in this section is essential to avoid delays, confusion, or missed opportunities.

Common challenges and how to overcome them

Students may not always have access to all the details of their qualifications (e.g. awarding organisation, date, result). For teachers and advisers managing numerous applications, it can feel overwhelming to double-check everything. Here are some top tips to make the process smoother and reduce errors:

1. Applicants should enter all achieved and pending qualifications on their application to provide a full academic history

This should be from secondary education (or equivalent) onwards; whether they have the result (including any ungraded) or they are still awaiting results. This includes all GCSEs and Level 2 equivalent qualifications. While this can be tricky for students who have transferred from other schools, having qualification slips or certificates on hand can help ensure accuracy.

It's important that pending and previously sat (including re-sat) qualifications are entered accurately. Before universities and colleges have qualification results they will use pending qualifications to make decisions.

2. Use a qualification shortlist in the adviser portal

Creating a tailored qualification shortlist can help students select the correct qualifications when filling out their applications. This is useful if your school or college teaches qualifications which appear similar in name or title. Keep it accurate – work closely with your exams officer to review and update the shortlist annually. Find out more about setting up your shortlist at www.ucas.com/new-registered-centres.

3. Ensure names and dates of birth match official documents

The name and date of birth entered in the application should match official documentation, such as a passport or exam board registration. Discrepancies can create issues with result matching, and later at enrolment.

It's useful if students in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland enter their Unique Learning Number (ULN) to help with matching of qualification results.

4. Focus on key fields

When reviewing the education section, certain fields are critical for UCAS to match qualification results with applications. Pay close attention to the following for each qualification:

- ▶ Qualification name
- ▶ Subject
- ▶ Qualification level
- ▶ Awarding body

Errors in these fields can lead to mismatches and delays when applicants get their results. The full list of results we receive and forward to universities and colleges can be viewed at www.ucas.com/sending-exam-results.

If any of your students' qualifications aren't listed, they will need to send their results on to their universities, colleges or conservatoires directly.

5. Use the 'Qualifications checked' box

If you've reviewed the accuracy of a student's education section, tick the 'qualifications checked' box in the adviser portal. This tick box is seen by universities and colleges as part of the reference. Learn more at www.ucas.com/references-and-predicted-grades#checkingqualifications.

What to do if a mistake is found after sending to UCAS

If an error is discovered or a qualification changes after the application has been submitted to UCAS:

1. Complete a qualification amendment form:

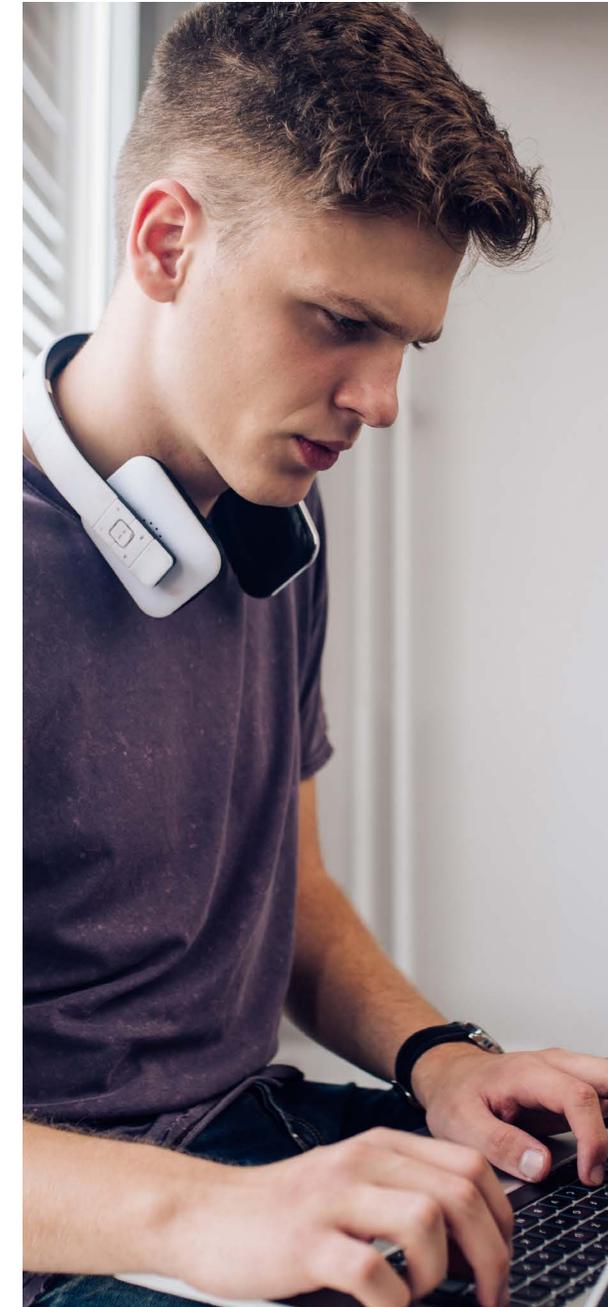
This is essential to notify UCAS of changes.

2. Inform universities and colleges:

Contact the chosen universities and colleges directly to make them aware of the updated information.

Acting quickly is crucial to minimise potential disruptions. UCAS can make some changes – check what we can do on the qualification amendment form at www.ucas.com/forms/request-amend-qualifications-listed-your-application.

By taking the time to ensure the education section is accurate, both students and advisers can avoid unnecessary delays or complications.



2.3 NEXT STOP – ADVISER PORTAL

Each UCAS registered centre will have a UCAS registered centre correspondent contact set up in the adviser portal with full permissions. This contact will be responsible for:

- ▶ annual setup of registered centre details, including creating a buzzword and setting application fee payment options
- ▶ reviewing staff access, adding new staff, setting their permissions, and assigning them to groups
- ▶ deleting staff who have left your centre or who are no longer involved with supporting your students through the application process
- ▶ creating and managing groups

IMPORTANT

Review your qualification shortlist each year to make sure accurate qualifications display to applicants when completing their education section.

If you're an existing UCAS registered centre correspondent, your centre details will be rolled over from the previous cycle. Check they are up-to-date, create your buzzword, and set up the application fee payment option for the new cycle.

If this is your first year as the UCAS registered centre correspondent for your centre, please see our [adviser portal guidance](#) for more information.

TOP TIP



When adding staff, it's important to use their work email address. If the email address you input for a staff member is different to the one they registered with, they won't be able to access the adviser portal. Both email addresses must match.

Adviser portal dashboard

The UCAS registered centre correspondent will see and have access to the following tiles on their adviser portal dashboard:

- ▶ **Application management** – a list of students linked to your centre pre-submission.
- ▶ **Tracking offers and decisions** – view offers and decisions of students linked to your centre post-submission to UCAS.
- ▶ **Centre management** – set up your buzzword, payment options, referees, and groups.
- ▶ **Staff management** – add and delete staff and set their permissions.
- ▶ **Data and reporting** – a link to see your subscribed paid for reporting or order additional paid for reporting.
- ▶ **Student Hub activity** – a list of students who have registered and their login activity in the UCAS Hub.
- ▶ **Outreach Connection Service** – see a list of opportunities/activities available for disadvantaged and underrepresented students (UK only).

In addition, all staff will have access to information and advice quick links at the bottom of the dashboard.

All other staff will see the tiles based on their permissions.

TOP TIP



If you cannot see individual students, you may need to be added to specific groups under 'centre management'. Please check with the UCAS registered centre correspondent at your centre to be added.

Permissions

Users of the adviser portal can have the following permissions:

- ▶ Manage staff – **it's important that all staff are reviewed regularly and anyone who has left your school/college/centre is removed from the adviser portal, to ensure security.** If you wish to delegate this to another member of staff, you may give them this permission too.
- ▶ Manage centre details
- ▶ Manage groups
- ▶ View applications
- ▶ Approve applications
- ▶ Send to UCAS
- ▶ Delete and undelete applications
- ▶ View references
- ▶ Edit references

- ▶ Approve references
- ▶ Tracking offers and decisions
- ▶ Student Hub activity
- ▶ Data and reporting

See the [adviser portal guidance](#) for more information on permissions.

Checking applications

From your dashboard in the adviser portal, you can check to see the progress your students are making with their applications in the 'Application management' tile.

You can check the overall status of each of your students' applications with the 'Applicant status' column and can filter based on this.

The 'Section progress' tab will show you at a glance, which applicant has completed each section – this can help you work out who needs more support, or a reminder.

TOP TIP



You can sort lists of students by name, group, or the status of their application. If you have a large number of students, listing by status is a convenient way of seeing who needs a reminder. See the [adviser portal guidance](#) for further information.

- ▶ Once your students have registered, and linked to you with the buzzword, you can view individual applications in progress at any stage by clicking their name in 'Application management' – you do not have to wait until they are complete or submitted to the school/college or centre.
- ▶ When a student marks their application as complete and reviews, pays, and submits, the centre can check the application, add predicted grades, and input their reference. At this point, the student will not be able to make any changes to their application unless you return it to them for a correction. Please check the completed application carefully before sending it to UCAS. **The main areas to be checked are their qualifications and choices.** If you fully check the qualifications, please tick the qualifications check box, which is in the 'Applicants' education' section in the adviser portal. This tick box is seen by universities and colleges as part of the reference.

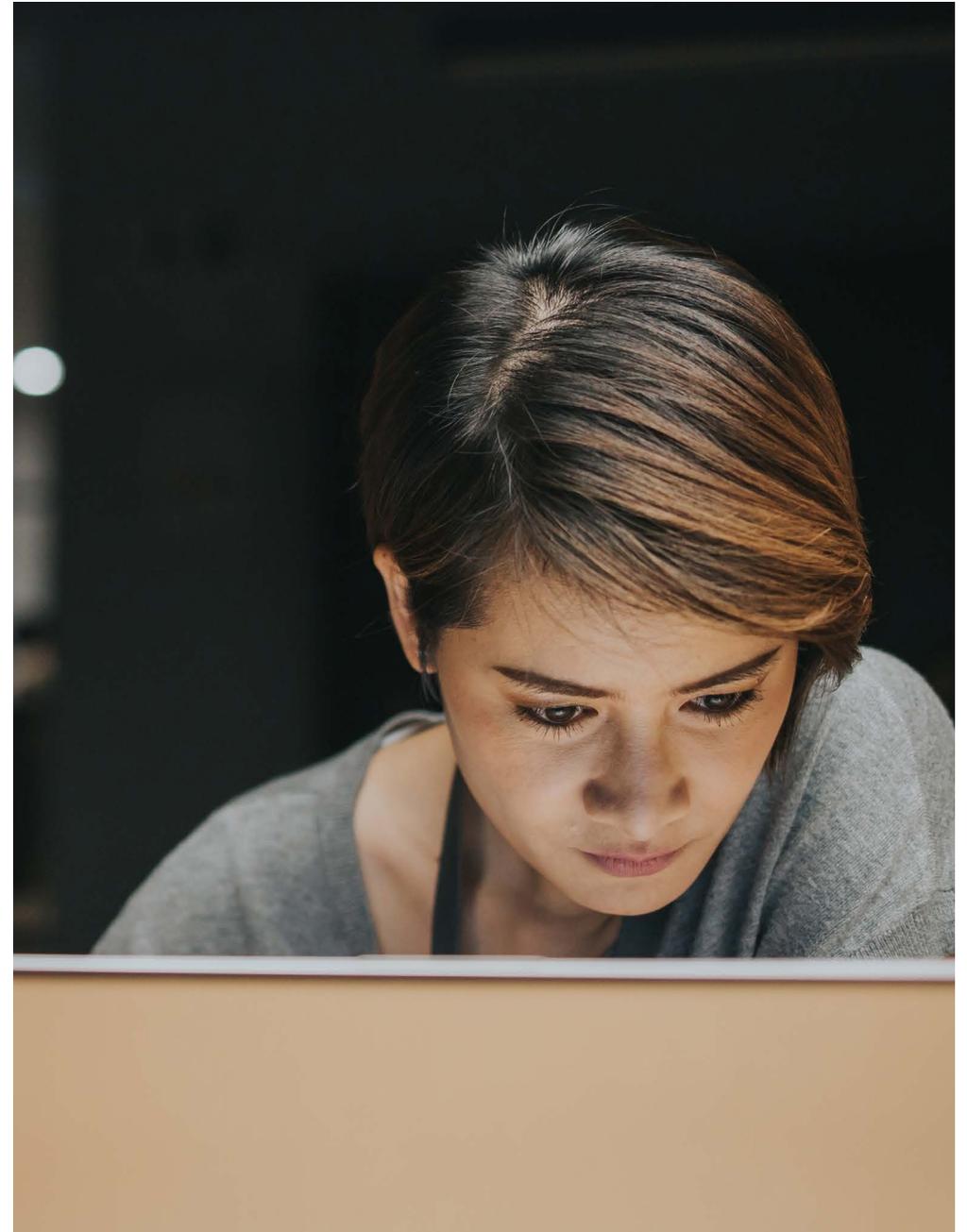
TOP TIP



If you return an application to be amended, the applicant will receive an email from UCAS to let them know they need to sign in to their application and check.

Your return to applicant message will appear in the email and on the student's application when they sign in. Add this message to your 'adviser notes' so you can refer to them when the student resubmits.

Student progress		Adviser progress		Adviser notes
Personal details	✓	More about you	✓	<input type="button" value="Edit"/>
Nationality	✓	Education	ⓘ	
Where you live	✓	Employment	ⓘ	
Contact details	✓	Extra activities	○	
Supporting information	✓	Personal statement	○	
Finance & funding	✓	Choices	○	
Diversity & inclusion	✓			
		Application complete	○	
		Qualifications checked	✓	
		Predicted grades complete	○	
		Reference complete	✓	
		Reference approved	○	
		Application approved	○	
		Sent to UCAS	○	



2.4 REFERENCES

It is your responsibility as a UCAS registered centre to identify relevant referees, add, and approve references.

Operational guidance for writing references

- ▶ There is a maximum of 4,000 characters, which includes spaces, section headings, and line breaks, all of which take up at least one character. Entered text will need to be under 3,800 characters. Most references will not need to use the total character count.
- ▶ If there are complex or sensitive circumstances (particularly if this relates to safeguarding considerations), it may be appropriate to highlight there are extenuating circumstances in section 2 of the reference and contact universities and colleges with more detailed additional information directly. **Information should only be provided in section 2 with the student's consent.**
- ▶ You cannot use **bold**, *italics* or underlining in the reference.
- ▶ You can write the reference in advance but should read what the student has written in their application before finalising it. There's no need to repeat anything the student has mentioned, unless you want to comment on it.
- ▶ Each university or college listed on the application will see your reference. They will not know where else the student has applied. Please do not refer to any of them in your reference otherwise you will effectively remove the 'invisibility' and could compromise the application.
- ▶ We recommend references are written outside the UCAS system, then copied and pasted into the application. If you type text directly into the space provided in the

'Reference' section of the adviser portal, it's important to save it regularly. Any interruption to the internet connection will result in all unsaved text being lost.

- ▶ Incomplete/draft references can be saved in the adviser portal and finished later. Once finished, they can be marked as complete, which means they are ready for the final check by a staff member who has the 'Approve reference' permission.
- ▶ We advise, where possible, that a different member of staff (not the referee) approves the reference.
- ▶ Always remember to save the reference before leaving the 'Reference' section in the adviser portal.
- ▶ A reference can be changed after it has been marked as complete or approved. **It cannot be changed once it has been sent to UCAS.**
- ▶ For more information on how to save, mark as complete, and approve references, please see the [adviser portal guidance](#).

Who should write the reference?

- ▶ The reference should be completed by the person who is best placed to comment on the academic ability of the student, which is normally somebody from the school or college they are currently studying at.
- ▶ The reference doesn't have to be written by the head teacher or head of sixth form – it's more important it's written by someone who knows the student well enough to comment on their individual circumstances.
- ▶ The named referee may be contacted by providers for additional information about the student. Consideration should be given to the name and contact details provided on the reference.



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



If applicable, enter any information about extenuating circumstances which may have impacted the applicant's education and achievement.



Outline other supportive information specific to the applicant and relevant to the course (s) applied for that you think universities/colleges should be aware of.

- ▶ We always advise that an individual email address associated with the official domain of the centre is given for everyone listed in referee contact details in the adviser portal. Universities and colleges may be unable to communicate with advisers who are not specified in the application or reference due to data protection laws.
- ▶ The referee chosen from the list created in the adviser portal is the name that will appear on the reference, even if another member of staff writes it.

IMPORTANT

It's essential any adviser responsible for writing students' references reads our full information and guidance about what to include in it at www.ucas.com/advisers/references.

PREDICTED GRADES

A predicted grade is the grade of qualification an applicant's school or college believes they're likely to achieve in positive circumstances.

These predicted grades are then used by universities and colleges, as part of the admissions process, to help them understand an applicant's potential.

Predicted grades are part of the reference, and it's the responsibility of the registered centre to make sure they have been added to an application. Usually, the named referee predicts the grades – if this is not the case, please state who has predicted the grades in the 'Reference' section. More information on how to enter predicted grades can be found in the [adviser portal guidance](#).

Predicted grades cannot be changed after the application is sent to UCAS

[Read more guidance and support for advisers when predicting grades.](#)

IMPORTANT

Copy references and the Data Protection Act

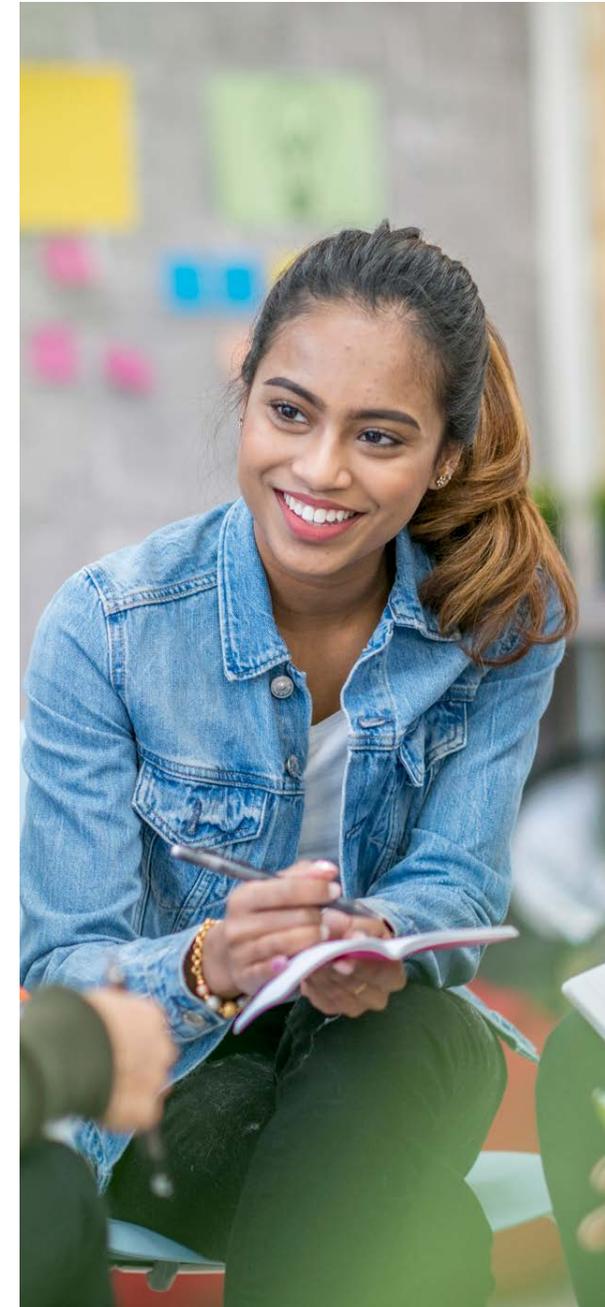
Under the Data Protection Act, students can request a copy of their application from us, including the reference, free of charge.

The following only applies to an individual or organisation ('agent') completing an application on behalf of someone else.

Before completing an application on behalf of someone else, an agent must:

- ▶ have all necessary authority to complete and submit the application on behalf of the applicant
- ▶ ensure the applicant has sufficient time to read and understand the applicant declaration, our website terms and conditions, and our privacy policy
- ▶ ensure the contact details supplied are of the applicant, ensure the applicant retains access to both the UCAS Hub tools and their application throughout the duration of the process
- ▶ ensure the applicant is aware of how to contact UCAS for support.

We have the right to cancel an application if we determine (having carried out any necessary checks), or have reason to believe, that an agent has not fully complied with these requirements.



SECTION 3: POST-SUBMISSION



SECTION 3: POST-SUBMISSION

3.1 AT UCAS

What happens when we receive an application?

Occasionally, we may need to query something with the applicant – if this happens, there may be a delay in sending the application to the universities and colleges.

Fraud and verification checks

UCAS' dedicated verification team is tasked with the prevention and detection of fraud in applications, and potential similarity in personal statements. We screen each application against a variety of markers to detect the level of risk. We then investigate flagged applications and cancel those deemed to be fraudulent.

Detecting fraud

Please make sure your students are aware of the following information about our verification team, and its work to identify fraudulent applications. More information and FAQs can be found at www.ucas.com/fraud-similarity

False or misleading information

If we, or a university or college, believe an applicant has left out any relevant information, or has given false or misleading information, we may take steps to check whether the information given is complete and accurate. If you have any reason to believe information we have about the applicant is not complete or accurate, you must tell us. We reserve the right to cancel an application without refunding the application fee.

Provide more information

We, and the universities and colleges, may at any time ask the applicant, their referee, or their employer, to provide more information about the application (for example, status, qualifications and grades, education, or employment history). If we do not receive that information by a set date, or if the information is not satisfactory, we reserve the right to cancel the application without refunding the application fee.

Personal statement similarity detection

Along with other verification checks, we carry out checks to verify personal statements are the applicant's own work. We run personal statements through similarity detection software, which flags any similarities to online personal statements, and those submitted by

applicants in past cycles. Following a check by the verification team, emails are sent to applicants and their choices to let them know when a similarity has been detected. The university or college decides whether to take any further action.

Reference

It's important your reference provides individual contextual information about the applicant. If an application, including the reference, has any false or misleading information in it, this could lead to an unfair decision outcome. In such circumstances, UCAS, and the universities and colleges, retain the right to cancel the application and withdraw any offers, without refunding the application fee.

Once an application has been processed through our databases, it's usually made available to universities and colleges within two working days of being sent to us. They can see the whole application, but at this stage, they can't see the applicant's other choices of university and college.

We require students to confirm their agreement by checking a box in the Terms and Conditions section before submitting their application. By checking this box, they are acknowledging and accepting the terms outlined in the declaration. Find more information at www.ucas.com/ucas-undergraduate-declaration.



3.2 AT THE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

What happens at the universities and colleges when they receive an application?

The universities and colleges begin their decision-making process. This differs between them, and even for different courses at the same university or college.

Applicants will hear about each of their choices at different times – sometimes they're contacted very quickly, or it may be several months before they hear anything.

Universities and colleges have deadlines by which they must make decisions on applications – this date depends on when the application was submitted to UCAS.

Application received at UCAS on or before	University or college must make a decision on or before
14 January 2026	13 May 2026
30 June 2026	15 July 2026

We have a provider advisory decision date of 31 March 2026, and ask universities and college to aim to have sent all decisions on applications received at UCAS by 14 January 2026.

To see the deadlines that universities and colleges must adhere by visit www.ucas.com/key-dates.

If we don't receive a decision from the university or college by the relevant decision deadline, we automatically make the application unsuccessful. This is explained to the applicant in their application, and in the adviser portal, under 'Tracking offers and decisions' you will see 'unsuccessful by default' (often referred to as a reject by default [RBD] by UCAS and universities and colleges).

Sharing information about a student's personal circumstances

Information about a disability or mental health condition, care experience or other personal circumstances is shared with the university or college at the point of application, so they can tell the student more about the support they can offer and make any necessary adjustments. In some cases, this information may be used to make the student a contextual offer.

This information is never used to make a judgement on a student's application.

Contextualised admissions – what this means for your students

Contextual information and data can be used by universities and colleges to assess an applicant's achievement and potential, considering their educational and socioeconomic background. The aim is to form a more complete picture of an applicant's characteristics.

As an adviser, it's important to be aware of this, so you can give the best advice to your students. Contextualised admissions encourage aspirational applications and may also help explain why a student has received a certain offer.

What practical steps can I take to help?

- ▶ Encourage your students to complete all relevant application fields in full. The contextual information submitted in an application is critical to facilitating contextualised admissions.
- ▶ Use the [reference](#) to indicate any further contextual information which might warrant special consideration. This could include individual circumstances – e.g. mature student, disability, widening participation activities, or information about your school which may affect performance, such as significant staff changes, or damage to buildings.
- ▶ Signpost students to the [individual needs](#) and [contextual admissions](#) advice.



3.3 WHAT APPLICANTS AND ADVISERS NEED TO KNOW

Making changes to an application after applying

There are some changes an applicant can make to their application once it's been submitted, but for others they need to contact the universities and colleges, or UCAS. For more details, go to www.ucas.com/makingchanges.

Changes to qualification details applicants have entered

Please let us know straightaway via our [webform](#) if any of your students' qualification details change, and let their chosen universities and colleges know too.

It's important to tell us, as it could delay the processing of qualification results if we are not updated. If results can't be confirmed, your student might not get their place.

Find out more about the exam results process at www.ucas.com/advisers/exam-results.

Checking for decisions

Universities and colleges send decisions to us, which we update on applicants' accounts. We then notify applicants by email – they need to check their inbox regularly.

Some students may need to complete admissions tests, interviews, or submit portfolios before decisions are made. Invitations for these may come via UCAS or directly from the university or college. While we encourage universities and colleges to update UCAS with all offers and invitations, some may contact students directly.

Interview invitations

Please remind students to reply to interview invitations as soon as possible. They can accept, decline, or request a new time or date – to change the date they must contact the university or college.

Frequent email checks are crucial during the application process.

Offers

Students can view their offers in their application, and advisers can see offers and decisions for their applicants in the adviser portal, under 'Tracking offers and decisions'. Centres receive offers and decisions at the same time as students. There are a number of quick links in this area to help you identify students who may need additional support, for example:

- ▶ Students with no offers
- ▶ Students with all offers received
- ▶ Students with unconditional offers

To understand what has been updated since the last time you signed in, you can sort your applicants by the 'Last updated' column. See our [adviser portal guidance](#) for full functionality.

An offer will be either conditional or unconditional. It will show details of the year and month the course starts, and the point of entry (for example, the second year of the course, rather than the first) will also be advised by the university or college.

Conditional offer – the offer has conditions. For example, the applicant has to achieve certain qualification results. Unless a different date is specified, the conditions must be met by 3 September (even if entry is deferred to the following year). The conditions may include achievement

of specific grades, possibly in named subjects, or a certain number of UCAS Tariff points.

Unconditional offer – this usually means the applicant has already met all the university or college's entry requirements for the course. They might still have to meet other requirements, such as financial or medical conditions.

The Fair Admissions Code of Practice published by Universities UK sets the behaviours for universities to improve fairness and transparency in the admissions system while maintaining high academic standards. Find out more at www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/fair-admissions-code-practice.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of UCAS' admission principles for our universities and colleges states: 'Providers must not place undue pressure (i.e. that which is not in the applicant's best interests) to directly or indirectly influence an applicant's decision'.

Offers may also be for an alternative course. This option can be used, for example, if the applicant has changed the subject they are studying, or if the university or college wants to make an offer for its HND rather than for a degree. The university or college should discuss an offer for a different course with the applicant before formally making its offer.

There are two other decisions a university or college can make.

Unsuccessful – the university or college has not offered the applicant a place on the course.

Withdrawal – the application to the course has been withdrawn because the applicant:

- ▶ asked to withdraw
- ▶ did not attend their interview, test, or audition
- ▶ did not reply to letters from the university or college
- ▶ has not chosen an alternative after the course has been withdrawn



ADVISER PORTAL APPLICANT STATUSES EXPLAINED

- ▶ **Ready to send to university / college** – applications that have been processed by UCAS, but not yet sent to the universities or colleges listed.
- ▶ **Waiting for university / college to respond** – applications that have been sent to the universities and colleges, but decisions have not been received from all choices.
- ▶ **Waiting for applicant's reply** – applicants have received decisions from their choices, and are now required to reply to their offers.
- ▶ **Eligible for Extra / Clearing / new choice(s)** – applicants who are not holding any offers, and can apply for further choices through Extra, Clearing, or by adding a new choice to their application. Applicants will be displayed in one of the following categories, depending on their status and the time of year:
 - **Waiting for Extra** – Extra has not yet started. Applicant applied to five choices, and either received no offers, or declined any offers received.
 - **Eligible for Extra** – Extra is open. Applicant applied to five choices, and either received no offers, or declined any offers received.
 - **Waiting for Clearing** – Clearing has not yet started. Applicant applied to fewer than five choices, and declined any offers received.
 - **Eligible for Clearing** – Clearing is open. Applicant has either been unsuccessful, or declined any offers received.

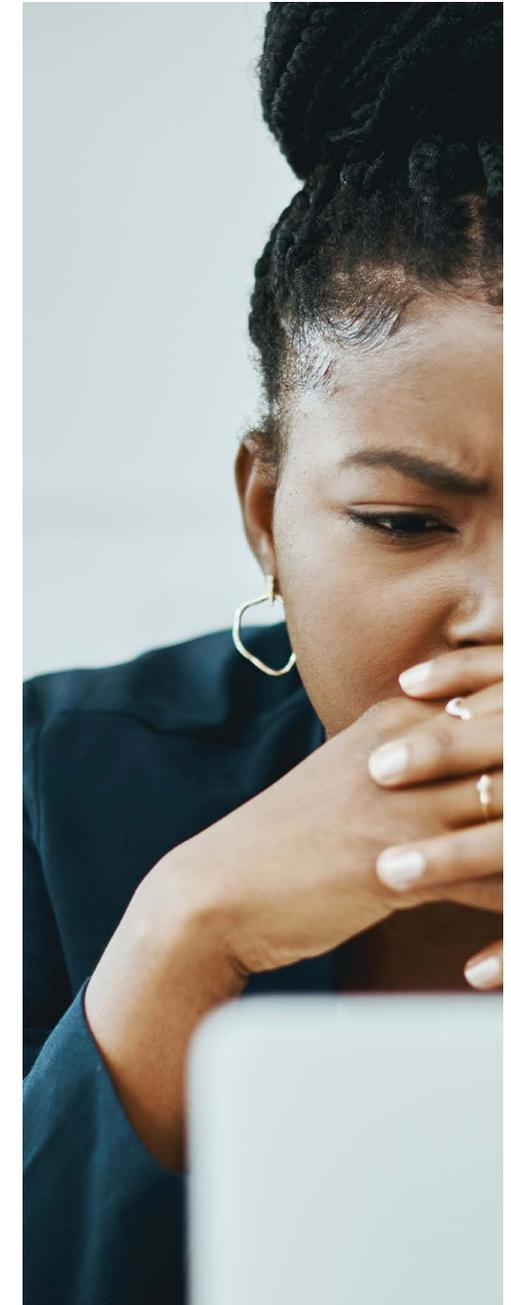
- ▶ **No offers, other options available** – applicant applied to fewer than five choices, and has been unsuccessful at all choices. Applicant is now eligible to apply for new choices (up to the maximum of five), or be entered into Clearing.
- ▶ **Has accepted offer(s)** – applicants who have accepted one of their offers (as their firm choice) or two of their offers (as their firm and insurance choices). Their firm choice will be conditional, for example, CF. Applicants with an unconditional firm offer (UF) are listed under Final place accepted.
- ▶ **In Clearing** – applicants who apply after 30 June, and are eligible to apply through Clearing for a choice.
- ▶ **University / college to make final decision** – applicants who are waiting for their university or college to confirm their conditional offer. The decision will be based on whether they meet the conditions of the offer.
- ▶ **Applicant to reply to revised offer** – applicants who have received a changed course offer from their chosen university or college, e.g. a change of course, entry year, or campus. These applicants need to reply to the revised offer in their application.
- ▶ **Final place accepted** – applicants who have firmly accepted an unconditional offer, received an unconditional offer after meeting their conditional offer requirements, or been given a place in Clearing.

- ▶ **Application cancelled** – there are several reasons why an application may be cancelled. It is usually because the applicant has chosen to cancel the application within 14 days of the date it was processed. If this is the case, the application fee is refunded, and the applicant is able to submit another application in the same academic year.
- ▶ **Withdrawn from this year's cycle** – applications that have been completely withdrawn from UCAS for the current academic year, either by the applicant or by the university or college the applicant accepted as their unconditional firm choice. Applicants are not able to submit another application in the same academic year.

TOP TIP

Before making any decisions, encourage your students to take a look at our advice on making informed choices –

www.ucas.com/undergraduate/after-you-apply/making-right-decision.



ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

The Applicant Status Report (ASR) and the Final Destination Report (FDR), which you can download via the adviser portal, use various abbreviations and codes. Please find below a list of codes you should find useful when interpreting your data.

Decisions and replies

- ▶ **REF** – Sent to provider for consideration
- ▶ **FULL** – Course became full after application sent to provider for consideration
- ▶ **INV** – Invitation from provider to attend interview, audition, or send portfolio
- ▶ **U(UF)** – Unconditional offer (firmly accepted)
- ▶ **UI** – Unconditional offer (held as insurance)
- ▶ **U(D)** – Unconditional offer (declined)
- ▶ **C(CF)** – Conditional offer (firmly accepted)
- ▶ **C(CI)** – Conditional offer (held as insurance)
- ▶ **C(D)** – Conditional offer (declined)
- ▶ **REJ** – Unsuccessful
- ▶ **W** – Withdrawn (either at the request of the applicant or provider)
- ▶ **C(DBD)/U(DBD)** – Offer declined by UCAS. Reply not received from applicant by deadline given
- ▶ **UCC(F)** – Unconditional Changed Course offer (firmly accepted)
- ▶ **UCC(DBD)** – Changed Course offer declined by UCAS. Reply not received from applicant by deadline given
- ▶ **CLA** – Clearing Accept
- ▶ **DCF(F)** – Delayed Confirmation of CF choice
- ▶ **RBD** – Reject by default (decision not received from provider)

Summary of conditions

Students will receive conditions which they will have to meet to secure their place at any of their choices. Universities and colleges abbreviate these conditions – below is a summary to help you understand what they mean.

- ▶ **M** – The offer is subject to satisfying the general entrance conditions of the provider.
- ▶ **A, B, C, D, E** – The offer shows the grades required in subjects at GCE Advanced level, or SQA Highers and Advanced Highers.
- ▶ **+** – The offer contains a GCE AS award requirement.
- ▶ **X** – The offer contains a GCSE / Standard Grade requirement.
- ▶ **F** – The offer contains a Foundation / Access course requirement.
- ▶ **G** – The offer includes a requirement for a financial guarantee.
- ▶ **H** – The offer also includes an alternative course / HND offer.
- ▶ **L** – The offer includes an English language qualification requirement.
- ▶ **T** – The offer is subject to industrial sponsorship being obtained.
- ▶ **J** – The offer contains an Edexcel Foundation / BTEC Scottish Qualifications Authority qualification required other than those covered by codes A – E above.

- ▶ **K** – The offer is based on other academic requirements, e.g. Irish Leaving Certificate or International Baccalaureate. You should refer to the applicant's offer letter.
- ▶ **N** – The offer includes non-academic conditions, e.g. satisfactory medical report or criminal record check.
- ▶ **Numeric e.g. 96** – The offer has been expressed in UCAS Tariff points. You can check Tariff points against grades at www.ucas.com/ucas/tariff-calculator.



STUDENTS WITH INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Some students' individual circumstances can have a significant impact on their decision to go to university or college – and on their experience when they are there.

To make sure all your students feel informed and prepared at each stage of their application journey, we've worked with expert organisations to bring together practical tips and useful resources for those who are advising students about their next step.

Applicants can share their individual circumstances when they complete their application. A wide range of support is available to help students with individual needs in higher education. This might be related to their studies, day-to-day activities, travel or lifestyle.

Some universities and colleges may use this information when setting the conditions of an offer (i.e. a contextual offer).

Disabled students (including mental health conditions, learning differences, and long-term health conditions)

All universities and colleges must, under the Equality Act 2010, make reasonable adjustments to ensure students are not disadvantaged. In the rare instance the university or college cannot meet an applicant's needs, their choice can be substituted with another

If an applicant is concerned about sharing an impairment or condition, please encourage them not to be. This information will not affect their chances of receiving an offer – it is used to ensure the student is supported throughout their studies.

With the applicant's permission, you may also use the reference to explain if their condition has impacted their performance or to highlight how they have overcome any challenges.

Our toolkit to help you support disabled students at each stage of their journey is available at www.ucas.com/adviser-toolkit-supporting-disabled-students.

The toolkit for supporting students with mental health conditions is available at www.ucas.com/supporting-students-mental-health-conditions.

Care-experienced students

All UK applicants are asked if they have ever spent time in local authority care, including foster care, in a residential care home, under a home supervision order (Scotland), or kinship care.

By sharing this information, the university or college may be able to help with:

- ▶ year-round accommodation, including during the holidays
- ▶ bursaries, scholarships, or access to hardship funds
- ▶ financial advice, such as budgeting and applying for additional support
- ▶ other support services, including mental health and wellbeing, childcare, disability, and careers guidance

Find practical tips to support care-experienced students at each stage in our toolkit at www.ucas.com/supporting-care-experienced-students.

Students estranged from their parents

UK applicants can flag if they do not have the support of either of their parents due to an irreconcilable breakdown in their relationship – or if they are in the process of becoming estranged from their parents. Many universities and colleges offer support to estranged students, such as:

- ▶ year-round accommodation, including during the holidays
- ▶ financial help, including bursaries, and support with applying for student finance as an independent student
- ▶ other support services, including mental health and wellbeing counselling, childcare, disability, and careers guidance

Find practical tips to support estranged students through each step of their journey in our toolkit: www.ucas.com/supporting-students-estranged-their-parents.

TOP TIP

Visit the Propel website at propel.org.uk for information about moving into higher education from care, and specific details about the support individual universities and colleges across the UK offer.



Students with caring or parenting responsibilities

Applicants who are parents, or provide regular care to a family member or friend with a disability, illness, mental health condition or addiction, can flag their circumstances in the UCAS application. Students may be able to access support such as:

- ▶ financial support, including bursaries
- ▶ help with managing health and wellbeing
- ▶ support services, such as childcare, money management advice, and careers guidance

For further advice, see our adviser toolkits for:

- ▶ **students with caring responsibilities:** www.ucas.com/supporting-students-caring-responsibilities
- ▶ **students with parenting responsibilities:** www.ucas.com/supporting-students-parenting-responsibilities

Refugees, asylum seekers, and students with an insecure immigration status

Applicants who are refugees, asylum seekers or have limited leave to remain may be able to access support to progress to higher education. Support is variable and will depend on the applicant's status, so it is important they research their options carefully before applying.

For further advice – including details of organisations who can offer free advice and guidance – see our adviser toolkit for supporting asylum seekers and refugees at www.ucas.com/supporting-refugees-and-asylum-seekers

Students from UK Armed Forces families

Students from UK Armed Forces families (sometimes referred to as 'Service children') have at least one parent or carer serving in the UK Armed Forces (regular or reservist).

You can get practical tips on supporting these students in our adviser toolkit: www.ucas.com/supporting-children-uk-armed-forces-families-service-children.

UK Armed Forces veterans and Service leavers

If you are supporting an applicant who has previously served in the UK Armed Forces themselves, you may find their journey to HE is slightly different, due to the alternative qualifications, training, and experience they may have.

Applicants should check the Ministry of Defence's ELCAS website for more information: www.enhancedlearningcredits.com.

For more details of how to support Service leavers and veterans with their application, read our adviser toolkit: www.ucas.com/supporting-uk-armed-forces-veterans-and-service-leavers.

TOP TIP

We strongly recommend students contact universities and colleges before applying, to discuss their individual circumstances and find out what support is available. If their circumstances change after they have applied, they should contact their chosen universities or colleges immediately. For more information, visit www.ucas.com/undergraduate-individual-needs.



UCAS TARIFF POINTS

The UCAS Tariff allows universities and colleges to draw comparisons between the wide range of qualifications they see on applications. Applicants may receive a conditional offer based on achieving a certain number of UCAS Tariff points.

Students cannot 'double count' exams in the same subject: if they have achieved an AS and an A level, or a BTEC Certificate and a BTEC Diploma in the same subject. Typically it is only the higher of the two which will get the points.

International students: Universities and colleges can make an offer based on qualification grades. Contact them directly to check their entry requirements for international qualifications.

Apprenticeships: From September 2026 onwards, applicants holding a Level 3 / SCQF Level 6 apprenticeship can also get Tariff points. These points will be published in May 2025.

For more guidance on the UCAS Tariff, visit www.ucas.com/advisers/tariff.

Our Tariff points calculator at www.ucas.com/ucas/tariff-calculator helps students add up their Tariff points. Only the points shown in bold can be included in the total.

Subject	Level	Grade	Tariff points
History	GCE AS	C	12
English language	GCE AS	B	16
French	GCE AS	B	16
Health and social care	GCE A	C	32
English language	GCE A	B	40
French	GCE A	C	32
Total Tariff points			116

DID YOU KNOW?

Tariff points are allocated to all Level 3 / SCQF Level 6 qualifications which have been UK-regulated. UCAS has not allocated Tariff points to international qualifications since 2021, with the exception of the Irish Leaving Certificate.



Replying to offers

When an applicant has decisions from all their choices, they need to decide which one(s) they want to accept. **The date they must reply to their offers by is shown in their application.**

- ▶ They can accept one offer as their firm choice.
- ▶ If that's a conditional offer, they can also accept a second offer as an insurance choice, if they want to, in case they don't meet the conditions of their firm choice.
- ▶ Any remaining offers are automatically declined when the firm and insurance choice are selected.

Choosing the right course and university or college is a very important decision, and it can be difficult to change later in the admissions process. To help applicants make an informed decision about where to apply, what to study, and whether to accept an offer, the university or college is required to make information available under consumer protection legislation.

You should encourage your students to read and understand this information before making a decision. If they have not received this information, are unclear about anything or have been made an offer that they are unable to meet because they have changed the qualifications they are studying, they need to contact the university or college for advice. Find out more at www.ucas.com/your-consumer-rights.

If an applicant firmly accepts an unconditional offer, they are committing themselves to take up that place and cannot hold an insurance choice.

Applicants need to think very carefully, and make sure they do not accept an offer from any university or college if they are not prepared to study there.

DID YOU KNOW?

Applicants don't have to hold an insurance choice. If they aren't sure any of their other offers are right for them, it might be better to wait and see what's available in Clearing.

It's important that applicants reply by the date we give them in the application status section. This date depends on when they receive the last decision from their chosen universities and colleges.

Last decision from university or college received on or before	Applicants must reply on or before
31 March 2026	6 May 2026*
13 May 2026	3 June 2026*
15 July 2026	22 July 2026**

* unless using Extra to find a place
** including Extra choices

You can see further key dates at www.ucas.com/key-dates.

Make sure your students are aware their reply date could be different from their friends.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR YOUR STUDENTS

If they don't reply to their offers on or before their reply date, UCAS will decline them on their behalf (often referred to as declined by default [DBD]). This means they will lose all their offers.

The UCAS application process complies with consumer law and the Competition and Markets Authority's advice. This means applicants have 14 days to change their mind after they accept an offer, which constitutes a contractual decision.



Extra – a chance to apply to more universities and colleges

All is not lost if your students are not offered a place at any of their five choices or they decline all their offers. You can encourage them to use Extra to apply to other universities and colleges that still have vacancies. It gives applicants an opportunity to look for a place earlier, instead of waiting for Clearing. They can apply for several courses in Extra, but only one course at a time. There are four steps to using Extra:

1. From February, search for courses with vacancies in the UCAS search tool at www.ucas.com/search.
2. Think about related and different subjects.
3. Get in touch with the university or college to check they can consider them. If they want to apply for a course different from their original choices, they can explain they've changed their mind, and offer to send a revised personal statement to support their application. However, they cannot change their original personal statement.
4. Add a choice in the application.

Find out more at www.ucas.com/extra.

See page 7 for the opening and closing dates of Extra.

Qualification results and Confirmation

UCAS receives qualification results from many awarding bodies and sends them to the universities and colleges holding offers for applicants. Tracking offers and decisions in the adviser portal will show real-time data on SQA and JCQ (including A levels) results days (once the embargo periods have been lifted). Check which results we receive at www.ucas.com/sending-exam-results.

DID YOU KNOW?

If your students are taking any other qualifications – in particular, non-UK qualifications – they must send their results to the universities and colleges themselves as soon as they receive them.

Universities and colleges require proof of qualifications entered in the application (e.g. GCSEs). International and EU students may need to send certificates or transcripts. Each university or college has its own policy on when to submit proof – some request it immediately, while others ask after their initial assessment.

When universities and colleges receive exam results, they decide whether the applicant has met the conditions of their offer. If they have, the university or college will confirm their place.

- ▶ If a university or college confirms a 'firmly accepted' offer, then the applicant is committed to that choice and the insurance choice, if they have one, is automatically removed. An applicant can use the 'decline my place' functionality if they want to give up their firm place and enter Clearing or choose an alternative pathway.
- ▶ If a university or college makes a confirmation rejection decision, the applicant might meet the conditions of their insurance choice, in which case the offer becomes 'firmly accepted' and they are committed to take that place.

If an applicant has made an insurance reply for one of their choices, they must be willing to take the place if they are not placed at their firmly accepted choice. If they end up committed to their insurance place and do not want it, they will have to release themselves into Clearing using 'decline my place' if they want to pursue other options for entry in 2026, or withdraw their application if they don't want to enter HE this cycle.

If an applicant doesn't meet the conditions of either their firm or insurance choice, they may still have their place confirmed. This is at the discretion of the university or college, and depends on a number of factors, such as how far off their results are from their offer, other students' qualification results, and the popularity of the course.

Once the results have been published, universities and colleges can add a reason why no decision has been made yet – this displays in the student's application and the adviser portal. If the student hasn't received any communication from the university or college, they should contact them to discuss their application. It's also worth checking whether there are any non-academic conditions the applicant has to meet, for example DBS or PVG checks.

If an applicant isn't successful at their firm or insurance choices, they will be able to use Clearing, unless they are offered an alternative course.

Change of course

If an applicant doesn't meet the conditions of one or both of their offers, a university or college may offer them an alternative, such as a:

- ▶ different course
- ▶ deferred entry place
- ▶ different point of entry (a 'year zero' foundation year instead of year one of a degree course)

If this happens, applicants have five days to decide if they want to accept the alternative offered. All their options will be explained in the offer on their application.

Reason for Confirmation pending

Universities and colleges can give applicants a reason why a Confirmation decision hasn't been made, so they know why there is a delay (e.g. awaiting a DBS check). This can also be viewed in the adviser portal, to help you support students.

Delayed or late qualification results

Universities and colleges will wait until 3 September to receive results, unless they specify a different date. If the results are not available until after this, they are not obliged to hold the place open. If you know of any results likely to be subject to delay, it's important the university or college is notified in good time.

Reviews and appeals

Applicants who use the review and appeal services have no guarantee their offers will remain open. It's imperative to notify universities and colleges of a possible change of grade as soon as a review is logged with the awarding body. Although they are under no obligation to agree to wait for a review of marking or appeal, students should ask them if they are able to hold the offer open. For more information, go to www.ucas.com/advisers/exam-results.

3.4 WHAT ABOUT CLEARING?

What is Clearing?

Clearing is an opportunity for students who do not have a confirmed place to find a course using UCAS' search tool – the only official vacancy listing. Clearing is used by tens of thousands of applicants each year and runs from the beginning of July – see page 7 for this cycle's date.

Who can use Clearing?

Applicants become eligible for Clearing at different points in the cycle, if they:

- ▶ do not hold a confirmed place after their qualification results are published
- ▶ have been unsuccessful at all their choices or have declined all offers when Clearing starts
- ▶ have declined or not replied to a confirmed offer of a changed course and, as a result, don't hold any offers
- ▶ submitted their application after 30 June
- ▶ have used 'decline my place' to enter Clearing

How do applicants use Clearing?

- ▶ When Clearing opens, if an applicant is eligible, they'll see the option to add a Clearing choice in their application.
- ▶ Lists of courses with vacancies in Clearing are published from the beginning of July until late September in our [search tool](#).
- ▶ Your students should check the lists for suitable courses, then contact universities and colleges to find out more and see if they will offer them a place. They must do this themselves – admissions tutors want to speak to them, not their parents or teachers.

- ▶ Applicants can apply for any course that has places. They don't have to keep to the same subjects they first applied for.
- ▶ The applicant must have permission from the university or college before they add a Clearing choice in their application. If they don't, their application may be delayed.
- ▶ If an applicant wants to decline their place and go into Clearing, they can release themselves from their firmly accepted offer in their application.
- ▶ If a student has individual support needs, they should mention this in any Clearing conversation to arrange support they may need.

Once a Clearing choice has been added, the applicant cannot change it until the university or college has made a decision. If they're accepted, they are firmly committed to that course. If the applicant is unsuccessful, they can repeat the process.

For all your Confirmation and Clearing key dates, essentials, and resources head to www.ucas.com/advisers/supporting-you-through-confirmation-and-clearing.

Decline my place

If an applicant is placed but no longer wants to go to this choice, they can use the 'decline my place' button in their application to release themselves into Clearing.

How does it work?

The process is simple, incorporating several warnings to make sure applicants fully understand what they are doing.

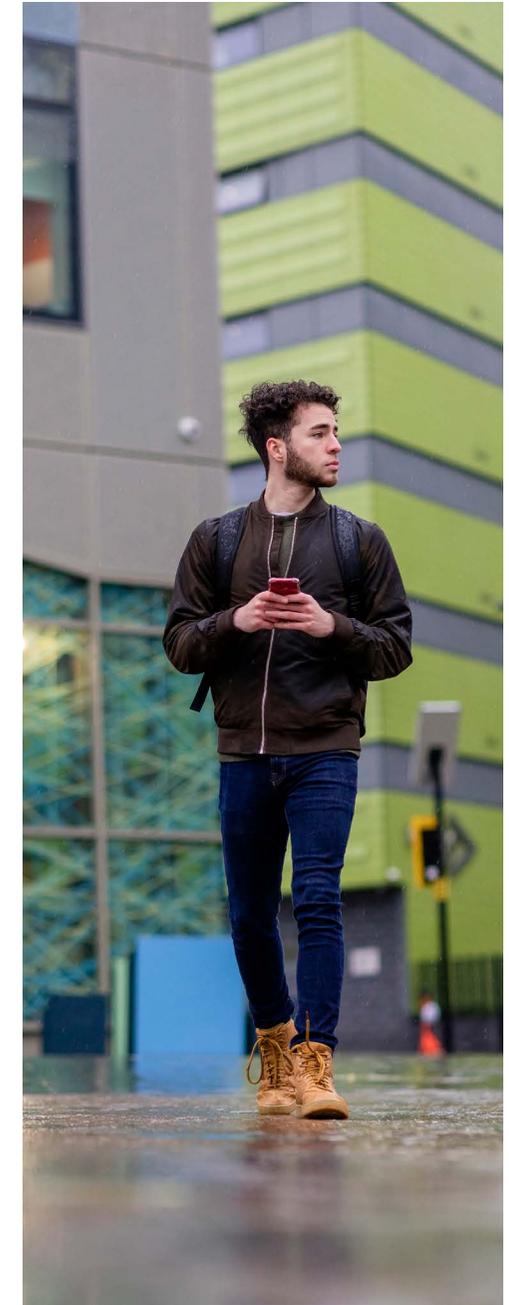
- ▶ The applicant signs in to their application and clicks the 'decline my place' button.
- ▶ They will be taken to a page which explains what they're about to do, and a drop-down question which they must complete before confirming.
- ▶ They will then receive an email to confirm they're in Clearing, advising them to phone the university or college they declined if they made a mistake.

If an applicant uses this feature, their contract with the university or college will be cancelled, and they will lose their place. Therefore, they should only use this button if they're sure they no longer want their place.

Clearing Plus

Unplaced students in Clearing can view a list of courses with vacancies which they've personally been matched to via their application – alongside our search tool.

To find out more visit www.ucas.com/what-clearing-plus.



3.5 THE RESULTS EMBARGO GUIDELINES QUALIFICATION RESULTS

Confidentiality of results

UCAS and universities and colleges are under strict embargo arrangements, through signed results embargo agreements with both the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ).

The results embargo periods allow universities and colleges to prepare for the publication of qualification results, so as many potential students as possible can see Confirmation decisions on the choices in their application by the official publication date.

The dates for these two embargo periods will be confirmed closer to results days and published on www.ucas.com/advisers.

To safeguard the integrity of the results embargo and ensure we retain privileged early access to qualification results, we implement restricted access to many of our systems.

During the two results embargo periods:

- ▶ the adviser portal will not show updated / real-time information
- ▶ universities and colleges cannot discuss any applicant's individual status with them, or with an adviser
- ▶ access to any information in the tracking offers and decisions section of the adviser portal is restricted. **Ensure you download any necessary information before the embargo periods e.g. Applicant Status Report (ASR)**

Breaches and inferences

During the embargo periods for [SQA](#) and [JCQ](#), we are all responsible for adhering to the strict rules imposed on us to protect the release of results data until the published dates and times.

A breach not only includes disclosure of results, but also any indication as to the outcome of a student's application they may interpret as an inference of their results. For example, if a student is made an offer on the basis of AAA at A level, and they receive notification that they have been accepted before the results embargo is lifted, they could infer that they have achieved AAA at A level.

It can be as stressful and confusing for applicants to hear an indication of the outcome of their application, as it is to hear of their actual results before publication day(s), particularly without the support network around them. It can also place unnecessary strain on other applicants who have not heard the outcome of their application and results.

Together, it is our responsibility to ensure all necessary steps are put in place to protect embargoed results information.

If you breach the results embargo, please follow the steps as guided by either SQA or JCQ. If you become aware of a breach by a university or college, please contact embargobreach@ucas.ac.uk in the first instance.



3.6 REPORTS FOR ADVISERS

In addition to accessing the free 'Tracking offers and decisions' section of the adviser portal, you can also download your Applicant Status Report and Final Destination Report.

Applicant Status Report (ASR) – filter and sort your applicants, and then download this ASR with real-time data, provided in an Excel spreadsheet. This is a snapshot of your students' statuses, which pulls through applicant data including their Personal ID (PID), their group, choices, offers (in summary and in full), and predicted grades. Staff who have access to tracking offers and decisions will only be able to see applicants in the groups they have permission to see.

Final Destination Report (available on the third tab in the spreadsheet) – applicants will only appear in this list when they have been placed, and therefore have their final destination confirmed.

More information on how to access, download, and interpret the data can be found in our [adviser portal guidance](#).

Upgrade your insight with additional reports

We have a number of packages available to purchase, for all the insight you need to assist with reporting, planning, and progression monitoring. You can view these from the 'Data and reporting' tile in the adviser portal. Each is designed to offer a different level of insight, but all provide information in easily accessible, touch-of-a-button formats.

Monthly key statistics report – £50

This insight report is designed to save you time, by providing key statistical trends and analysis of your students. It's an easy way to keep colleagues and senior leadership teams informed of progress throughout the cycle.

Silver package – £200

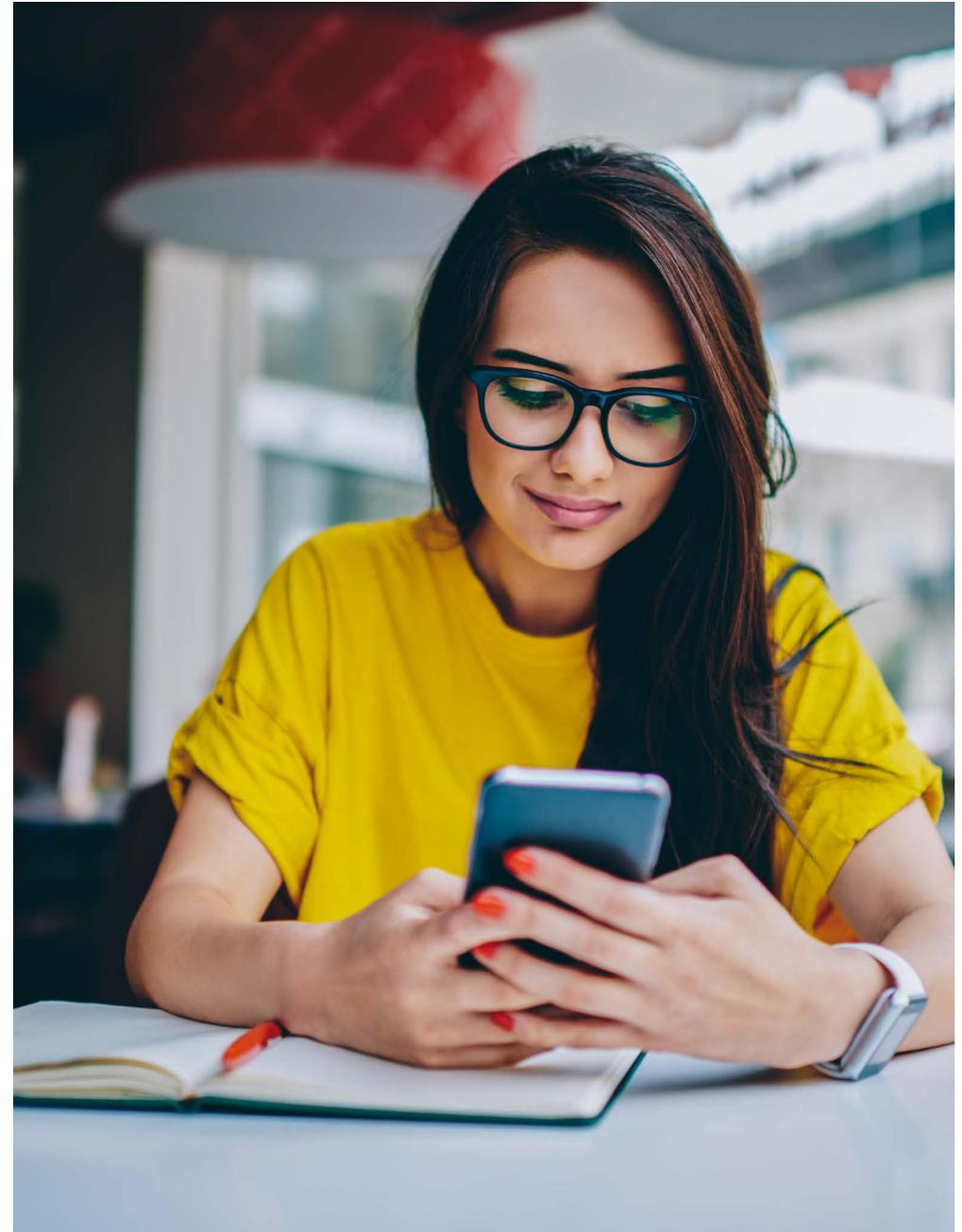
Providing more in-depth information about your students, helping you understand your current situation and how it compares to previous years. It's the ideal option for planning ahead and identifying areas for focus.

Gold package – £275

This package combines all the benefits of the silver package, with increased information to help you understand your performance against specific competitors.

- ▶ Monthly key statistics report
- ▶ Annual progression report
- ▶ Annual destination data map
- ▶ Annual competitor report

Visit ucas.com/advisers-reports for more information on each package and to view sample reports.



SECTION 4: UCAS TERMS EXPLAINED



SECTION 4: UCAS TERMS EXPLAINED

Admissions test – some universities and colleges require applicants to sit an admissions test for certain courses, in addition to making a UCAS application.

Adviser portal – the service UCAS registered centres use to manage and track the progress of their students' applications – before and after they have been sent to UCAS.

Applicant – a person who has started a UCAS application.

ASR – the Applicant Status Report (ASR) is available from the adviser portal and is a real-time snapshot listing all your students, their predicted grades, their choice of universities and colleges, their offers, full conditions, and replies – it's available anytime you want to download it.

Buzzword – a word or phrase, chosen by a school or college, which links its students to them when they start an application.

Cancellation – an applicant, university, or college cancels a choice before a decision has been made.

Centre – an organisation advising students applying to HE (in addition to schools and colleges, this includes the British Council and careers offices).

Changed course offer – applicants might get one of these if they haven't met their offer conditions, or if the university or college has made changes to the courses they run. It might involve a different start date or point of entry, or a different course altogether.

Clearing – the service used towards the end of the application cycle. If your students have not yet secured a place, they can apply for course vacancies.

Clearing Plus – Unplaced students in Clearing can view a list of courses with vacancies that they've personally been matched to.

Conditional offer – an offer made by a university or college, subject to certain conditions, usually related to qualification results.

Confirmation – the outcome of a conditional offer which has been accepted by an applicant. If the applicant meets the conditions, the place will be confirmed – if not, the applicant may not be accepted.

Decline by default (DBD) – we decline an outstanding offer on the applicant's behalf if they haven't replied by their reply date.

Deferral – holding an offer to start in the following year.

Entry requirements – what the university or college recommends you need to do / have to get on the course – from qualifications and specific subjects or grades, to interviews, admissions tests, and medical requirements.

Extra – the opportunity to apply for another course, if an applicant has used all five choices and is not holding any offers.

FDR – the Final Destination Report (FDR) shows confirmation of your students' destinations and is available to download from your 'Tracking offers and decisions' section, as and when applicants are placed.

Firm offer – the offer an applicant has accepted as their first choice.

Fraud – provision of false, incomplete, or misleading information by an applicant or their referee or agent.

HE – higher education.

Historical entry grades – now displayed in our search tool and adviser portal, this data shows the historic grade profiles of applicants accepted onto courses, alongside offer rates. It empowers students to make informed decisions about their future by understanding the actual grades of previous students accepted onto courses.

IAG – information, advice, and guidance offered by advisers about progression to higher education.

Insurance offer – the offer an applicant has accepted as their second choice (in case they don't meet the conditions of their firm offer).

Invitation – an invitation from a university or college to attend an interview or audition, or to provide a portfolio, essay, or other piece of work.

Nominated access – applicants can supply details of a third party (usually a parent, guardian, or teacher) to act on their behalf in contacting UCAS.

Personal ID – a ten-digit individual number assigned to an applicant when they start their application. Applicants will be asked to provide this number if they contact our Customer Experience Centre.

Personal statement – structured text applicants write to show why they're applying, and why they'd be a great student for a university or college to accept.

Point of entry – year of entry to the course – for example, '2' means they would start in the second year of the course.

Reject by default (RBD) – we reject outstanding decisions not yet made by the provider by their relevant deadline.

Search tool – our online search tool for undergraduate and postgraduate courses at universities, colleges, conservatoires, and other HE course providers – www.ucas.com/search.

Similarity detection software – used by UCAS on all applications, to identify personal statements containing content which has similarities with previously submitted personal statements, or with those held as a library resource.

Status code – every applicant is assigned a status code. These can be used to quickly open a student bank account with a bank or building society. Find out more at www.ucas.com/student-banking

SECTION 4: UCAS TERMS EXPLAINED

Subject Spotlights – Subject Spotlights from Springpod give students the chance to try a university course before they apply: www.ucas.com/advisers/help-and-training/springpod.

UCAS Tariff – the UCAS Tariff is the system for allocating points to some qualifications used for entry to undergraduate higher education. Not all qualifications are included on the Tariff.

Unconditional offer – an offer given to an applicant who has met all the academic requirements for the course – the place is theirs if they want it. The university or college might have other requirements, such as financial or medical conditions, which need to be met.

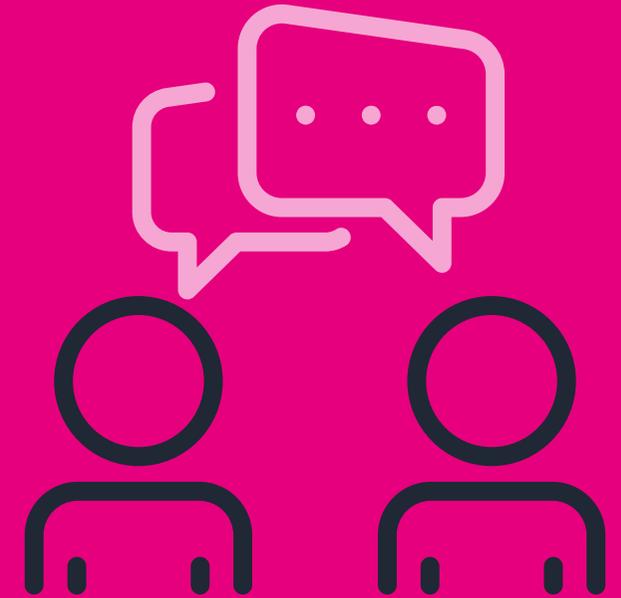
Unibuddy – an online platform giving students the chance to talk to current undergraduates about their experiences and get peer-to-peer advice: www.ucas.com/chat-to-students.

Unsuccessful – the university or college has not offered the applicant a place on the course.

Withdrawal – before the decision has been made to make an offer or not, the applicant, or the university or college, can withdraw a choice.



SECTION 5: UCAS INFORMATION AND ADVICE



The **UCAS Hub** is designed to help your students explore all their options in one central place, but on ucas.com we also offer a range of information and advice about apprenticeships, taking a gap year, and going into employment, as well as resources to support students exploring and applying to higher education.

We're aware that many teachers and advisers are also keen to refresh their own knowledge of these options, so they can advise and support their students as they approach their choices. Here is a quick guide to the information, advice, and resources on ucas.com.

Higher education

- ▶ [Careers Quiz](#)
- ▶ [UCAS events and exhibitions](#)
- ▶ [Universities and colleges](#)
- ▶ [Preparing for an open day](#)
- ▶ [Subject guides](#)
- ▶ [Subject tasters](#)
- ▶ [Choosing what to study](#)
- ▶ [Search for courses and apprenticeships](#)
- ▶ [Higher Technical Qualifications](#)
- ▶ [Choosing where to study](#)
- ▶ [Location guides](#)
- ▶ [Study at a conservatoire](#)
- ▶ [Dates and deadlines](#)
- ▶ [Applying to university](#)
- ▶ [Entry requirements](#)

- ▶ [Writing your personal statement](#)
- ▶ [2026 personal statement guides](#)
- ▶ [International students](#)
- ▶ [Students with individual support needs](#)
- ▶ [Interviews](#)
- ▶ [Conservatoire assessments](#)
- ▶ [Money and student life](#)
- ▶ [Accommodation advice](#)
- ▶ [Preparing for your studies](#)

Apprenticeships

- ▶ [What is an apprenticeship?](#)
- ▶ [Apprenticeships in the UK](#)
- ▶ [Apprenticeships in Wales](#)
- ▶ [Apprenticeships in Scotland](#)
- ▶ [Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland](#)
- ▶ [Apprenticeships in England](#)
- ▶ [Apprenticeship and graduate job search](#)
- ▶ [Industry guides](#)
- ▶ [Apprenticeship application guides](#)
- ▶ [How I got my apprenticeship](#)
- ▶ [Employers](#)

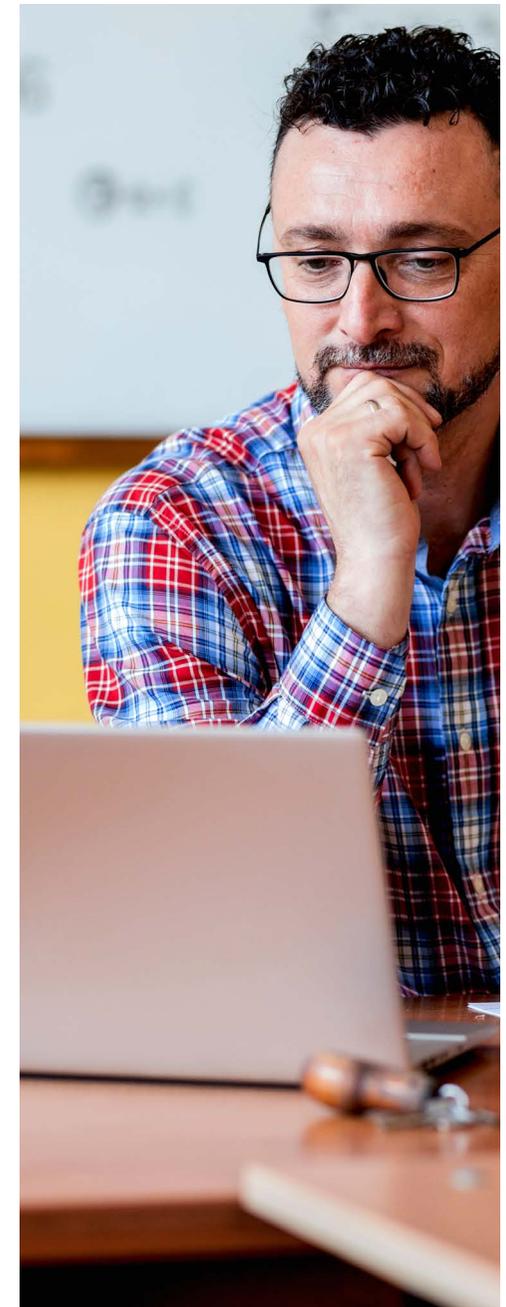
Gap years

- ▶ [Gap years](#)

Jobs and careers

- ▶ [How to get into work](#)
- ▶ [What are employers looking for?](#)
- ▶ [Find career ideas](#)
- ▶ [Apprenticeship and graduate job search](#)
- ▶ [Virtual Work Experiences](#)
- ▶ [Internships](#)
- ▶ [Explore jobs and careers](#)
- ▶ [Is work experience important?](#)
- ▶ [Applying for jobs – tips](#)
- ▶ [How to write a CV](#)
- ▶ [CV Builder](#)
- ▶ [Interviews](#)
- ▶ [How you get paid at work](#)
- ▶ [Working for yourself – self-employment and starting a business](#)

To help you support your students with their research, we've developed a number of classroom resources, lesson activities, and student packs for you to use and share with them. Download your copies at www.ucas.com/guides-for-teachers and www.ucas.com/advisers/lesson-activities.



ANNEX A: DATA PROTECTION AND INFORMATION SECURITY



ANNEX A: DATA PROTECTION AND INFORMATION SECURITY

During the application process, you will be processing your students' personal data, assuming the role of a data controller, and responsible for the correct handling of this data, as set out in the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Looking after your adviser portal sign in details

To guarantee the security of your students' data, please ensure your password is unique but memorable, in line with our onscreen guidelines. Your password must be between eight and 30 characters long, and contain all the following:

- ▶ uppercase letter
- ▶ lowercase letter
- ▶ number
- ▶ special character (e.g. !£\$%#)

UCAS cannot reset your password for you

You need to use the 'Forgotten password' link on the sign in screen.

You must use your organisation's email address and not your personal one. Please do not share your sign in details. If another member of staff requires access to the system, those with staff management permissions can grant this for them. Please contact the [Adviser Help Team](#) if you need help.

To support the security of yours and your students' data, UCAS uses multi-factor authentication (MFA) for all users. Find out more at www.ucas.com/mfa.

Security Incidents involving your centre

UCAS must be informed immediately when a centre becomes aware of a security incident which has, or is likely to, impact on UCAS systems. This includes (but is not limited to) the loss or theft of credentials used to access UCAS systems or any other security incident affecting centre IT systems which may cause a direct impact to UCAS.

UCAS will then assess the impact and any restrictions required (including whether it is necessary to temporarily suspend access to some or all of its systems) while the incident is managed, and will work with you to reinstate access as soon as practicably possible once assurances of system integrity have been provided and deemed acceptable by UCAS.

This will enable UCAS to ensure the safety and security of applicant data. If you become aware of a security incident, please email adviserhelp@ucas.ac.uk.

Setting up groups

Users should be given access to the appropriate level of data they need to conduct the duties of their role. Setting up the appropriate groupings in your centre's system will assist with this, making sure staff can only access the data of the students they are supporting.

Information sharing

As a data controller, any further use of the applicant's information over and above UCAS admissions should be handled under your own processes in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR.

Hard copies

Do not print personal data unless there is no other option. If you need to print any personal data from the system, you need to ensure the handling of this data is secure.

- ▶ **Do not** leave the data in any open areas where it may be seen by third parties.
- ▶ **Do not** take the data out of your centre if at all possible. This will ensure there are no issues of loss in transit.
- ▶ **Do not** leave hard copy data in vehicles or have it on view on public transport. If you do have to take it outside of the centre, please use a secure method of transportation, such as a locked briefcase.
- ▶ **Do not** keep hard copy data for longer than it is needed. Please refer to your centre's retention policy and ensure this is enforced.
- ▶ **Do not** allow others to see this data if they would not be able to access it via the system.
- ▶ **Do** store hard copy data securely. If this data is to be kept in hard copy form, it should be securely stored. We would advise a 'double lock' approach, whereby it is kept in a locked drawer, in a locked room.
- ▶ **Do** ensure it is confidentially destroyed when you have finished using it.

Inappropriate use of the system

Accessing personal data, where you do not have a legitimate reason to do so, is a breach of the Data Protection Act 2018.

Please do not look at students' details if you are not supporting them. This includes students you are related to or know in a non-professional capacity.

Subject access requests

If a student requests access to any of their personal data, you should action this in line with your own data protection policy and processes.

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Copies of this publication can be downloaded from www.ucas.com/adviserresources.

Terms of service for the adviser portal can be found at www.ucas.com/about-us/policies/terms-and-conditions/adviser-portal.

For further information and guidance about the UCAS application process for advisers, visit www.ucas.com/advisers

