

UCAS

# UCAS' NEXT CHAPTER

2025+

ALL WHO  
COULD BENEFIT  
FROM HIGHER  
EDUCATION, DO



# BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

The reasons for students not progressing to undergraduate study are complex, ranging from a lack of understanding of the options available to them, attainment, or inequalities in access to high quality information and advice. **This strategy is focused on offering greater support to these students so all who could benefit from higher education, do.**



**1M+**  
REGISTER

Each year, over one million students register with UCAS to start that next step into higher education

**750K**  
[-400K]

400k students do not reach the stage of submitting an application

**700K**  
[-50K]

50k do not receive an offer – most often mature or international students with limited choices

**560K**  
(-140K)

140k remain unplaced in undergraduate study every year and are eligible to find a place through Clearing



“ENSURING MORE STUDENTS CAN ACCESS THE LIFE-CHANGING OPPORTUNITIES OF THE UK'S WORLD CLASS INSTITUTIONS IS AT THE HEART OF UCAS' ROLE AS THE NATIONAL SHARED ADMISSIONS SERVICE. I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES, AND SCHOOLS TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS SO THAT ALL THOSE WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM HIGHER EDUCATION, DO.”



**Dr Jo Saxton CBE**  
CEO, UCAS

# UCAS' ROLE IN THE HE LANDSCAPE

## EACH CYCLE, UCAS SUPPORTS:

- ▶ **350+** UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES
- ▶ **OVER 7,000** TEACHERS AND ADVISERS
- ▶ **OVER ONE MILLION** STUDENTS TO EXPLORE THEIR OPTIONS

## 750,000 APPLICANTS, OF WHICH:

- ▶ **43%** ARE UK 18-YEAR-OLDS
- ▶ **1 IN 4** ARE OVER THE AGE OF 21
- ▶ **150,000** APPLY FROM OVER 200 COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES AROUND THE WORLD



# UCAS' DNA

UCAS HAS TWO INTERTWINED AND INSEPARABLE CORE AMBITIONS — THIS DOUBLE HELIX FORMS UCAS' DNA AND IS CENTRAL TO OUR STRATEGY:

**Support the sector in increasing participation and student success**

**Deliver increasing value as the UK's shared admissions service**

Everything UCAS does will aim to support these ambitions, and we'll be steered by our principles:

**Serve the four nations**

**Be institution and route agnostic**

**Champion the student**

**Drive value and efficiency**

**Support fairness and transparency**

# CHARITABLE PURPOSE:

TO ACT AS THE UK'S SHARED  
ADMISSIONS SERVICE

**VISION:**

**ALL WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM  
HIGHER EDUCATION, DO**

# BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

- ▶ Each year, over **one million students register** with UCAS to start that next step into higher education. However, **400,000 students** do not reach the stage of submitting an application
- ▶ **750,000 students apply** and 50,000 do not receive an offer
- ▶ **560,000 students** are placed in undergraduate study every year
- ▶ Only **20%** of students in receipt of free school meals enter higher education, compared to **37%** of the wider population
- ▶ Over **half of 18-year-olds in London** progress to higher education, compared to fewer than **1 in 3 in the North East and Wales**
- ▶ **1 in 5 close** a door to a course they are interested in due to their choice of qualification and subject at school or college
- ▶ The reasons for these are complex, ranging from a lack of understanding of the available options, attainment barriers, or inequalities in access to high quality information and advice
- ▶ This strategy is focused on offering greater support to these students, making it easier for universities and colleges to connect with them, so ultimately more of them can benefit from the life-changing experiences UK higher education offers

# IMPACT OF THE FSM WAIVER

Cost of living and financial considerations are increasingly shaping student choices.

For the 2025 entry cycle, UCAS removed the application fee for students in receipt of free school meals during the last six years.

As of January 2025, this has benefitted over 30,000 students.

- ▶ **57%** of FSM students said **the fee waiver made them more likely to apply**
- ▶ **66%** of **POLAR Q1** students in receipt of FSM were more likely to apply
- ▶ **67%** of those who said the increased cost of living made them less likely to go to university **said the fee waiver had made them more likely to apply**



“ IN ABOLISHING THE APPLICATION FEE FOR STUDENTS WHO RECEIVE FREE SCHOOL MEALS, UCAS HAS IN A SINGLE SWIPE STOPPED MONEY BEING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIER FOR STUDENTS. ”

Dan Morrow, CEO and trust leader for Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust



**UCAS AIMS TO SUPPORT  
THE SECTOR IN INCREASING  
PARTICIPATION AND STUDENT  
SUCCESS WHILE DELIVERING  
INCREASING VALUE AS THE UK'S  
SHARED ADMISSIONS SERVICE.**

**WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS THROUGH  
FOUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:**

1

## **DELIVER FRICTIONLESS AND FLEXIBLE SHARED ADMISSIONS SERVICES**

**Creating a truly digital and  
data-driven admissions journey.**

- ▶ More information in the application is pre-populated and verified, making it easier for students, schools, colleges, and universities
- ▶ Clearing becomes more digital
- ▶ Enabling multiple start dates and lifelong learning



2

## CREATE PERSONALISED PATHWAYS TO LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD

**The support UCAS offers to every student is uniquely tailored to them.**

- ▶ Students receive personalised support at every step of their journey
- ▶ Earlier engagement with UCAS guides students at key decision points, such as qualification and subject selection
- ▶ Tailored content inspires disadvantaged students and raises awareness of support available



3

## EQUIP SUPPORTERS TO ENABLE DREAMS

**UCAS provides teachers, parents, and carers with the digital tools and support they need to help students progress.**

- ▶ An enhanced adviser portal gives schools and colleges greater oversight of their students' progression
- ▶ A more frictionless application journey creates efficiencies in schools and colleges
- ▶ Parents and carers are empowered to support students every step of the way



4

## TRANSFORM RAW DATA TO REAL INSIGHTS

**Providing more insight to support strategic decision-making in universities and colleges.**

- ▶ Earlier engagement with students provides a longer-term view of progression
- ▶ UCAS data makes it more efficient to recruit the right students
- ▶ Supporting the sector in tackling barriers to progression through deeper insight



# #WEAREUCAS

These values guide our staff in delivering for UCAS' beneficiaries:

- ▶ Beneficiary and customer centricity
- ▶ Accountability
- ▶ Trust
- ▶ Expertise





# UCAS' NEXT CHAPTER

## CHARITABLE PURPOSE

To act as the UK's shared admissions service

## VISION

All who could benefit from higher education, do

Supporting prospective students from ages 8 to 80

## DUAL PRIORITIES: OUR DOUBLE HELIX

- ▶ Support the sector in increasing participation and student success
- ▶ Deliver increasing value as the UK's shared admissions service

## OPERATING PRINCIPLES

- ▶ Serve the four nations
- ▶ Be institution and route agnostic
- ▶ Champion the student
- ▶ Drive value and efficiency
- ▶ Support fairness and transparency

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Deliver frictionless and flexible shared admissions services
- ▶ Create personalised pathways to level the playing field
- ▶ Equip supporters to enable dreams
- ▶ Transform raw data into real insights