

THE UCAS APPLICATION:

THE SUPPORTER'S TOOLKIT

A step-by-step guide to the UCAS process for anyone helping students to research their options and apply to higher education

UCAS



ARE YOU HELPING SOMEONE **APPLY TO UNIVERSITY** BUT YOU'RE NEW TO UCAS?

THIS GUIDE WILL HELP YOU FROM **START TO FINISH**

STEP 1

DISCOVER YOUR OPTIONS

- ▶ How to use the UCAS Hub to research options
- ▶ Individual support needs
- ▶ Open days

STEP 2

SEARCH AND SHORTLIST

- ▶ Find courses and universities
- ▶ Shortlist favourites

STEP 3

APPLY AND SEND

- ▶ Complete the UCAS application
- ▶ Sharing personal circumstances
- ▶ The personal statement
- ▶ References
- ▶ Final checks
- ▶ Apply for finance
- ▶ Think about accommodation

STEP 4

DECISIONS AND OFFERS

- ▶ University decisions
- ▶ Replying to offers
- ▶ Results and confirmation
- ▶ Clearing

STEP 5

GET READY TO GO!

- ▶ Sort finances
- ▶ Prepare for HE study
- ▶ Get ready for independent living

STEP 1

DISCOVER YOUR OPTIONS



THE UCAS HUB: WHAT IS IT?

This is where applicants can access tools and information to:

- ▶ explore and research their options
- ▶ shortlist choices
- ▶ apply to courses
- ▶ track and reply to decisions

Register for the Hub any time!

Applicants don't have to be ready to apply, or even apply at all – it's a great place to explore all options and pathways, whether they:

- ▶ have a clear idea of what they want to do and how to get there
- ▶ have some ideas but need more information
- ▶ don't have a clue where to start!

Want to know more ?

Read our complete **guide to the UCAS Hub** and find videos and downloadable resources



THE UCAS HUB: WHAT YOU NEED

To create a personalised Hub dashboard and plan next steps, applicants need:

- ▶ a computer, laptop, phone or tablet
- ▶ an email address
- ▶ to create a memorable password

Ready?

Register and get started on the Hub

Next, they can tell us about the subjects or courses of interest, and where they might like to study. Their content will be personalised based on their preferences, and even suggest related options they might not have considered.

Top Tip

**Why not register on the UCAS Hub and look around yourself?
Feel free to sign up and explore.**



INTERESTED IN AN APPRENTICESHIP?

UCAS can help with that too! Visit our [apprenticeship pages](#) for more information and advice, and to search for opportunities.

HUB TOOLS TO HELP STUDENTS EXPLORE THEIR OPTIONS



KPMG

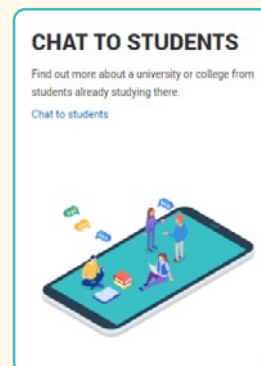


Construction, architecture, and the built environment

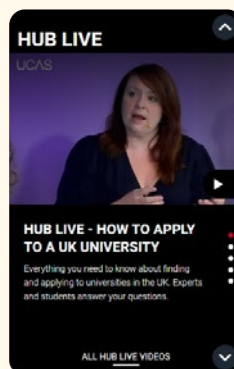
Subject, industry and employer profiles give details about different careers and options. Learn about and search for apprenticeships alongside degree courses.



The **Careers Quiz** and **What to study next** tools suggest possible career and study pathways matched to students' skills, interests and qualifications.



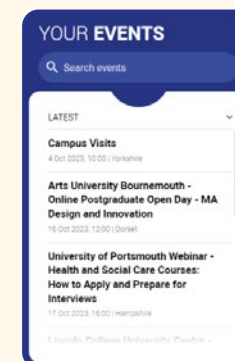
Chat to students: Find out what it's like to study at a particular university, or on a certain course with current students through UniBuddy.



Hub lives: Rewatch our series of Hub lives about making decisions and applying.



Favourites: bookmark information, subject guides, universities, and courses – and return to it later.



Your Events: find upcoming UCAS exhibitions and university open days.

HUB TOOLS TO HELP STUDENTS EXPLORE THEIR OPTIONS

University course tasters

Experience what a university course would be like with Springpod's Subject Spotlights. These interactive, virtual university course tasters feature real-life lectures, seminars, and academics.

[More info](#)



Subject tasters let you try before you apply, giving a taste of what it's like to study real subjects delivered by university lecturers. These taster courses are created in partnership with universities and include interactive activities.

UCAS

Discover Study Apprenticeships Advice For

Search

Virtual work experiences

Hub For You Favourites

Search

< Search all 24 results Page 1 of 2

Filters

Sector

Status

Location

Organisation



Met Office Careers

Science & Research

This programme will explore an array of career opportunities available at the Met

Starting 03/07/2023

Apply by 26/06/2023



Health and Social Care Work Experience - South West

Healthcare & Medicine

This programme will explore an array of career opportunities available at the Met

Available 12/02/2024 – 31/10/2024

Available now



Sustainability, Support and STEM with Severn Trent

Science & Research

This programme will explore an array of career opportunities available at the Met

Starting 31/07/2023

Apply by 21/07/2023

Virtual work experiences

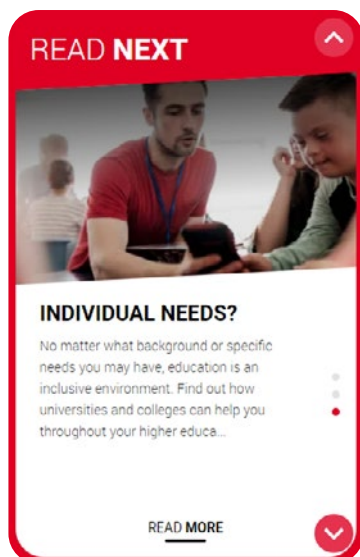
are real work experience opportunities offered by the world's leading employers across a range of careers. These incorporate real workplace activities and the chance to interact with industry professionals – all online and available now.



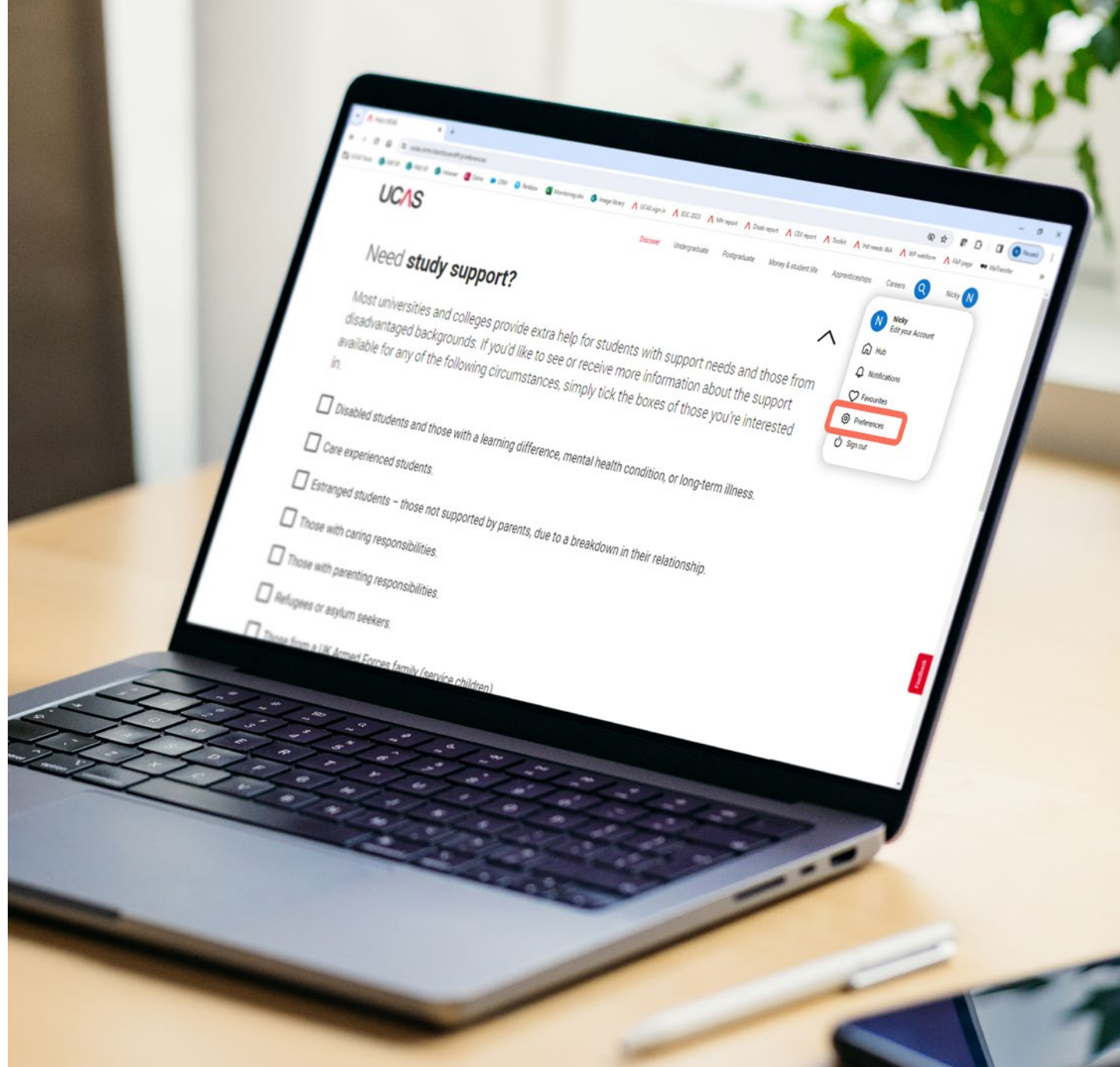
On completion of subject tasters and virtual work experiences, students will receive a completion certificate. Applicants may talk about these courses in their personal statement as evidence of their extra research into the subject area or career type.

GET INFORMATION ABOUT SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

In the **Preferences** section (see right), students can tick any of the boxes that apply to their circumstances. This will help UCAS show content they may find useful.



Students can also find information and advice about getting support for their individual needs.



READ ABOUT SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

UCAS EXHIBITIONS

These free events happen all over the UK from spring through to autumn to help young people consider their options – students need to register in advance.

Discovery events: talk to universities, colleges, employers and apprenticeship providers all under one roof. Find out more about traditional degrees, apprenticeships, careers and more.

Read UCAS' Ultimate Guide to Discovery Exhibitions to make the most of the visit.

CREATE YOUR FUTURE EVENTS

Exciting exhibitions dedicated to creative careers. Talk to universities, colleges, conservatoires, employers, and industry experts – and watch live performances from current students.

UNIVERSITY OPEN DAYS

These happen all year round and are free to attend. They are a great opportunity to visit the campus and decide if it is the right fit. Students usually need to book a place in advance.

The UCAS **guide to open days** will help students:

- ▶ find an event
- ▶ plan their day
- ▶ know what to ask
- ▶ reflect on their visit

If the student can't attend, see if they offer a **virtual tour**. They can also chat to current students about the university on **UniBuddy**.

Widening access and participation outreach opportunities

There are many programmes, activities and events that encourage students from under-represented backgrounds to consider higher education. These are available through universities, regional partnerships (e.g. UniConnect) and other organisations.

Contact the university directly for more information, or the UCAS adviser at the student's school will be able to find the right opportunity.



SEARCH FOR ALL EVENTS AND OPEN DAYS ON [UCAS.COM](https://ucas.com)

STEP 2

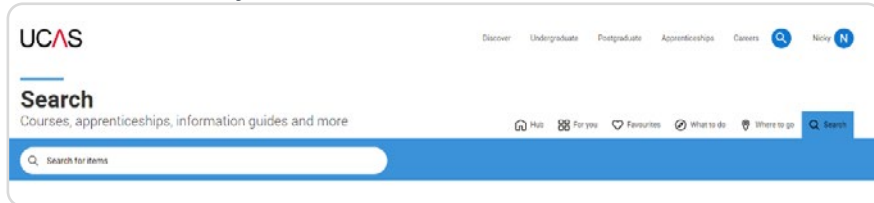
SEARCH AND SHORTLIST



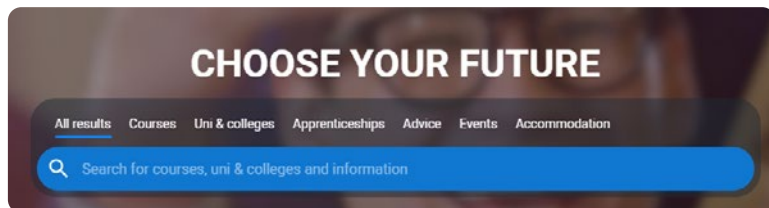
HOW TO SEARCH

Once the applicant has researched their options, the next step is to search and finalise their course choices.

To find courses, you can either:

A screenshot of the UCAS website's search interface. At the top, the UCAS logo is on the left, and navigation links for Discover, Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Apprenticeships, Careers, and Nicky are on the right. Below the logo, the word 'Search' is prominently displayed, followed by the text 'Courses, apprenticeships, information guides and more'. A horizontal menu contains links for 'Hub', 'For you', 'Favourites', 'What to do', and 'Where to go'. At the bottom, there is a blue search bar with the placeholder text 'Search for items' and a magnifying glass icon.

Search in the Hub

A screenshot of the UCAS Hub search interface. The header 'CHOOSE YOUR FUTURE' is centered at the top. Below it, a horizontal menu lists 'All results', 'Courses', 'Uni & colleges', 'Apprenticeships', 'Advice', 'Events', and 'Accommodation'. A blue search bar with a magnifying glass icon contains the placeholder text 'Search for courses, uni & colleges and information'.

Use the blue search box on the homepage of ucas.com

Students can search by:

- ▶ course title
- ▶ subject area
- ▶ university or college name
- ▶ apprenticeship opportunity



CONSERVATOIRE APPLICATIONS

Conservatoires are specialist institutions that offer performance-based courses, such as drama and music. There is a separate UCAS application for these courses - [find out more](#).



SEARCH RESULTS

Search results appear as 'tiles' – click on them to read more details, such as:

- ▶ **Course summary** – a brief description of the course and modules.
- ▶ **How to apply** – deadlines, course codes and information on applying.
- ▶ **Entry requirements** – a full list of qualifications and grades students need to apply.

SHORTLISTING AND FAVOURITES

Favourite and shortlist courses by **clicking the heart icon**. When they've decided on their final five courses, they are ready to apply.

Favourites

Review your favourites and shortlist

Hub For you Favourites

2 Shortlist
Review your choices

8 All Favourites
View favourites collections

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Each course and university has specific requirements for studying - usually a mix of qualifications, subjects, or exam grades. They vary from one course to another but they are outlined on the UCAS course pages.

[Read more about entry requirements](#)

CONTEXTUALISED ADMISSIONS

Universities recognise that some students face additional challenges during their education which may impact their results. Some may adjust their entry requirements to students who meet their eligibility criteria.

[Find out more about contextualised admissions](#)

HISTORICAL ENTRY GRADES DATA

Sometimes, students are accepted with lower grades than advertised. For many courses, we will show you the range of grades that have been accepted in previous years. This can help students to make informed and aspirational choices.

[Read more about historical entry grades data](#)

STUDENTS IN SCOTLAND

Courses at Scottish universities have two sets of entry requirements: standard and minimum.

For those who are considered to be 'widening access' students, the minimum entry requirements apply.

[Read more about entry grades in Scotland](#)

STEP 3

**APPLY
AND SEND**



HOW TO COMPLETE THE UCAS APPLICATION

Click Start on the **Your Applications** tile in the Hub dashboard.



Link to your school or college using the **Buzzword** provided. If you are not applying from a school or college, skip this step.

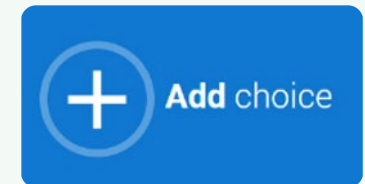
Enter the Buzzword from your school, college, or centre

Buzzwords are case-sensitive and will be given to you by your school, college or centre.

Enter Buzzword here

Save Buzzword Cancel

Add up to five courses using the **Add Choice** box.



Enter the required information for each section and **mark as complete**.

You can save the application at any time and complete it later. You can't mark the section as complete until all required information is added (marked with an asterisk*).

☐ Mark this section as complete *

You must complete all mandatory fields in this section before you can mark it as complete. All sections must be marked as complete before you can send your application.

Save this section

The dashboard will show progress **for each section**

SECTIONS OF THE APPLICATION

Applicants can save their progress and edit until they're ready to submit. **They must complete the following sections:**

- ▶ **Personal details** – some details will auto-fill using the information given during registration. There will be more questions about student support and where they live.
- ▶ **Where you live** - address history for the past three years
- ▶ **Contact details** – address, email, telephone number, and details of anyone who they wish to act on their behalf.
- ▶ **Nationality details** – birthplace and nationality.
- ▶ **Supporting information** – if they've lived or worked (or have parents from) the EU, EEA or Switzerland.
- ▶ **Finance and funding** – how they will fund their studies? Most UK applicants choose 'UK, ChI, IoM, or EU student finance'.
- ▶ **Diversity and inclusion (UK applicants only)** – most of this information is only shared with universities after a place is confirmed and it is used for equality monitoring.

- ▶ **More about you** – More details later in this section.
- ▶ **Education** – all schools attended since age 11, with qualifications achieved and pending. If the applicant is awaiting exam results, predicted grades will be included in the reference. Applicants should have qualification certificates/transcripts ready so they can enter the details accurately.
- ▶ **Employment** – full or part-time paid employment. Applicants can talk more about this, along with any voluntary work or unpaid work experience, in their personal statement (see below).
- ▶ **Extra activities** – if they've participated in an activity to prepare them for university (e.g. an outreach programme), they can give details here.



MORE ABOUT YOU - SHARING PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

There's lots of support available to help students from different backgrounds. These questions are included to help applicants access support and information support – they do not affect the applicant's chances of receiving an offer, and all data is treated sensitively.

This information gives the university a better understanding of the applicant's achievements – they don't just look at grades. In some cases, they may adjust their usual offer to help them access their chosen course – this is called 'contextual admissions' - [read more here](#).

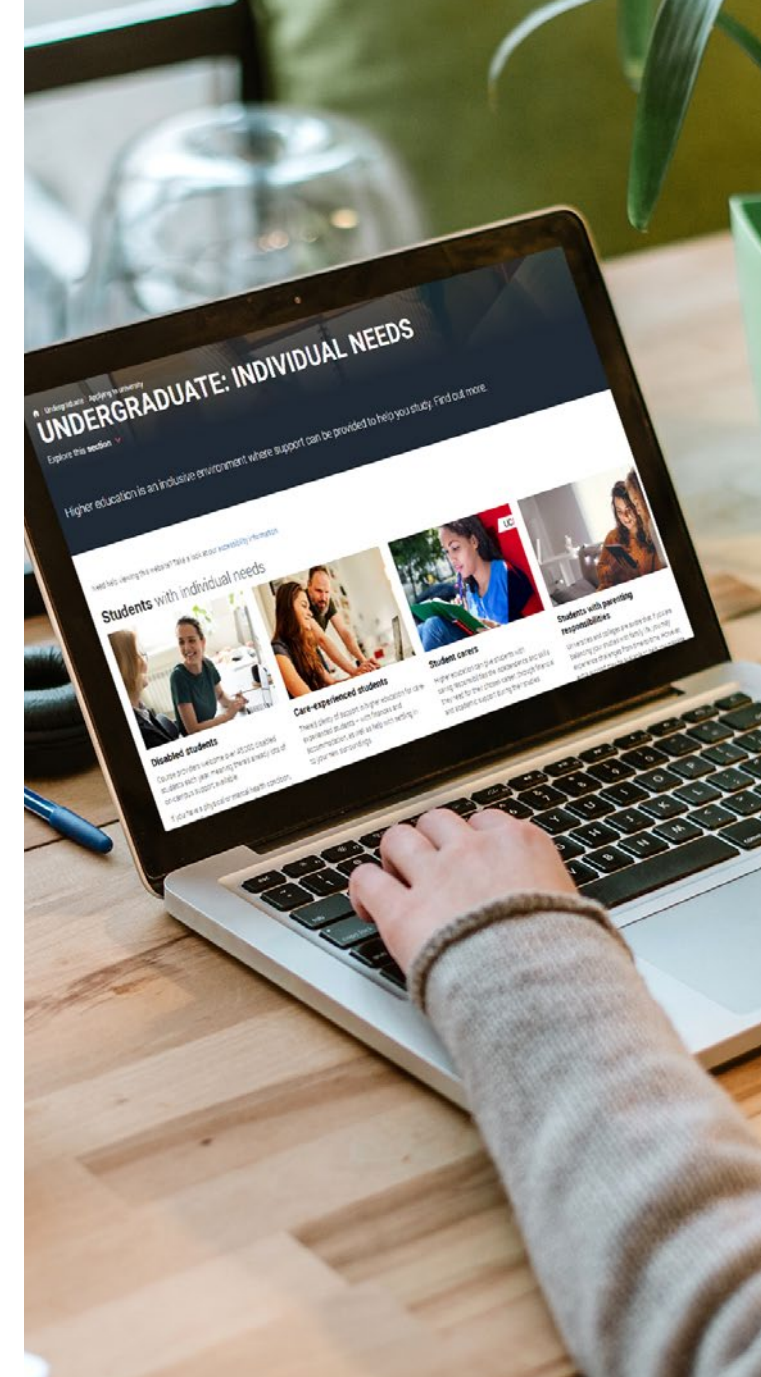
More about you >

Tell us about any circumstances that you might need support for during your studies

[Start this section](#)

Applicants can share if they:

- ▶ are disabled (including mental health conditions, learning differences and long-term health conditions)
- ▶ have caring responsibilities
- ▶ have parenting responsibilities
- ▶ are estranged from their parents
- ▶ are a refugee, asylum seeker or have limited leave to remain in the UK
- ▶ are from a UK Armed Forces family
- ▶ are a UK Armed Forces veteran
- ▶ were in receipt of free school meals in secondary education



[READ MORE ABOUT APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY WITH](#) **INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT NEEDS**



THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

There are three sections to the personal statement. Students are asked three questions:

1. Why do you want to study this course or subject?
2. How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course?
3. What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

THE REFERENCE

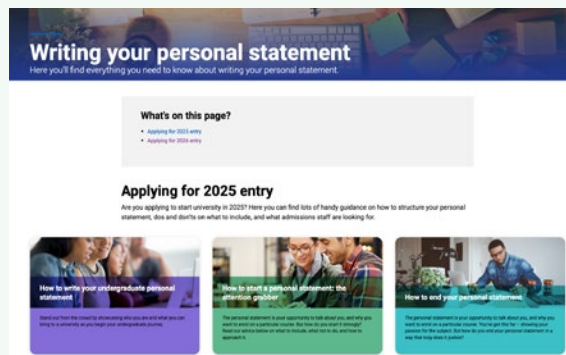
This is a written recommendation from a teacher, careers adviser, trainer, employer or other professional who knows the applicant academically or professionally.

Those applying independently (i.e. not in school or college) will be asked to enter their referee's contact details and UCAS will email them for the reference.

Once this is received, the applicant will be prompted to pay and send their application.

For applicants linked to a school or college, the reference will be requested once they pay and submit.

[Read more about references](#)



UCAS offers lots of help with **writing a personal statement**, including

subject guides, tips on what to include for each section, and specific guidance for:

- **mature applicants**
- **students with caring responsibilities**
- **students estranged from their parents**
- **refugees and asylum-seeking students**

You can also find information about writing a personal statement for **conservatoire** and **postgraduate** applications

SENDING THE APPLICATION - FINAL CHECKS

- **Make sure all sections are marked as complete.**

Watch out for asterisks next to questions which must be answered.

☐ Mark this section as complete *

- **Check course application deadlines.**
Some courses have different deadlines – often a long time in advance of the start of the course. For Oxford and Cambridge universities, and medicine, dentistry and veterinary courses, the UCAS deadline is in October. Most other courses are in January. Check the course information page in the Hub, and [our key dates page](#).
- **Pay the application fee.**
The application can only be submitted when the £28.95 fee is paid. This can be paid online by credit or debit card. Avoid sending applications at the last minute in case of payment problems. If the applicant is currently at school or college and has been in receipt of free school meals during their secondary

education, they may be eligible for this fee to be waived – check with the school. [More information about paying the application fee.](#)

- **Making changes to the application.**
After submission, the applicant can only update their contact details. To make other changes, they must contact UCAS on **0371 468 0 468** with their Personal ID number.



Note: If applying through a school/college, there may be a different internal deadline. This is to allow time for the adviser to check the application and write the reference.

Late applications

Those who miss the January deadline can still apply up until 30th June – but universities do not have to consider late applications and course places may already be filled. After this, applicants can apply for vacancies in Clearing (see Step 5).



NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO THINK ABOUT...

... FINANCE AND FUNDING

This usually includes a tuition fee loan (except in Scotland where this is covered by the government) and a maintenance loan. What is available depends on where you live in the UK and your household income – we cover all the details in our **guide to student finance**.

- ▶ **Repaying student loans:** if a young person is worried about paying back a loan, reassure them that they only start when earning above a certain salary threshold.
- ▶ **Other funding:** Some universities and organisations offer bursaries, grants and scholarships. These do not have to be paid back but there may be application deadlines, so check early. **Read more about other funding**.
- ▶ **The Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)** helps with additional study-related costs. Read UCAS' **comprehensive guide to DSA** – including eligibility and how to apply.

... ACCOMMODATION

If the applicant is planning to move away, they should start to think about accommodation. There are lots of options, from halls to shared houses. The university can help, and you can read more about how to choose on our **accommodation pages**.



STEP 4

DECISIONS AND OFFERS



UNIVERSITY DECISIONS

After the application is sent, applicants can track the universities' decisions in their Hub. There are several different decisions they may receive:

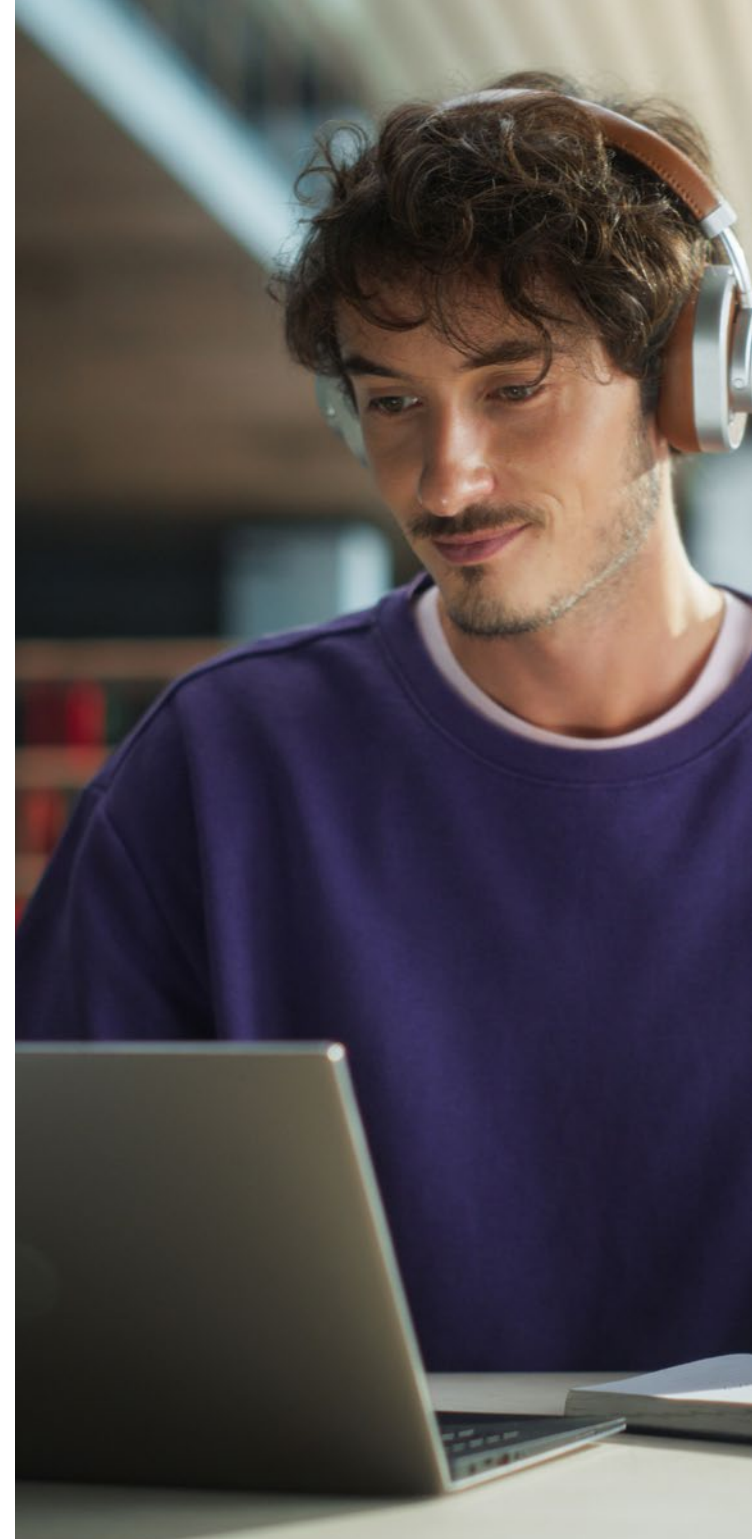
- ▶ **Conditional offer** – the applicant has a place if they meet certain requirements (e.g. exam grades).
- ▶ **Unconditional offer** – the applicant has been accepted and the place is theirs if they want it.
- ▶ **Unsuccessful** – the university has decided to not offer the applicant a place. They might provide a reason, but you can ask for more information if not.
- ▶ **Withdrawn** – the university has withdrawn a course choice. This might be due to a missed interview or not responding to an email or letter. It can also mean that the applicant has withdrawn.

[Read more about UCAS decisions](#)

INTERVIEWS

Applicants may be invited to attend an interview before a decision is made. The university will get in touch via the Hub or contact the applicant directly with the details. Depending on the type of course, this might be an audition or a portfolio of work.

[Read more about interviews.](#)



HOW TO REPLY TO OFFERS

Once the applicant has received all their offers, it's time to reply. They will be given a deadline to reply, so take some time to consider this decision carefully.

Read more about reply dates.

Applicants can accept two choices – a **firm** choice and an **insurance** choice:

Firm choice – their first choice, the place they most want to go.

Insurance choice – the back-up choice in case they miss the conditions of their firm choice.

Once the firm and insurance choices are chosen, all other offers must be **declined**.

Read more about replying to offers

Unconditional offers: if the applicant accepts an unconditional offer as their firm choice, they cannot add an insurance choice because they have committed to accepting the firm place. However, they may accept an unconditional offer as their insurance choice – as a guaranteed back up.

TRACK DECISIONS IN THE UCAS HUB:



2023 UNDERGRADUATE APPLICATION

Waiting for decisions

Universities or colleges are considering your application.

Providers have until dd-mm-yyyy to respond to your choices.



2023 UNDERGRADUATE APPLICATION

All decisions received

You've received a decision from all of your choices. You can now reply to your offers at any time.

Reply by dd-mm-yyyy



2023 UNDERGRADUATE APPLICATION

Waiting for confirmation

You're waiting for confirmation of your choices. If you meet the offer conditions, the university/college will confirm your place. Send them your results if requested.

[Go to application](#) ➔

If the applicant makes a mistake or changes their mind, call UCAS on **0371 468 0 468** with their Personal ID number within 14 days. One of our advisers will be able to help.



RECEIVED NO OFFERS? THERE ARE STILL OPTIONS!

If the applicant is unsuccessful in all choices (or they have declined all offers), they may be able to find a place through **Extra**.

This service is available February to July and allows applicants holding no offers to apply to one additional course at a time. Eligible students will see the Extra option in their Hub.

When Extra closes, applicants holding no offers can still apply for vacancies through **Clearing** (see below).

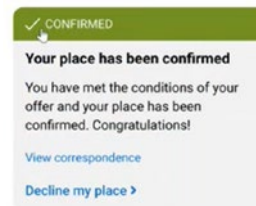
[Read more about Extra choices](#)



Top tip: check if there are any other conditions to meet before the place is secured (e.g. passing DBS checks)

FINAL DECISIONS - CONFIRMATION

Applicants awaiting results (e.g. A levels, Scottish Highers, BTECs) for a conditional offer, can see if they have been accepted in their UCAS Hub. This usually happens on **results days** in August.



NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL? THERE ARE STILL OPTIONS!

It can be a difficult time for applicants who don't get the grades they need but it's not the end of the road.

Firstly, wait for the decision in the Hub – missing a grade doesn't necessarily mean the student won't be accepted. If they are unsuccessful, they can use Clearing (below) to find an alternative place or [explore other options](#).



READ OUR [FULL GUIDE TO RESULTS DAY](#) - INCLUDING WHAT HAPPENS AND NEXT STEPS

CLEARING

Clearing is a service where universities fill empty spaces on their courses – and where applicants can find alternative places.

This service is available to applicants who have:

- ▶ been unsuccessful in securing a place at their firm and insurance choices
- ▶ chosen to decline their offers
- ▶ applied after 30 June

Many courses and universities are available in Clearing.

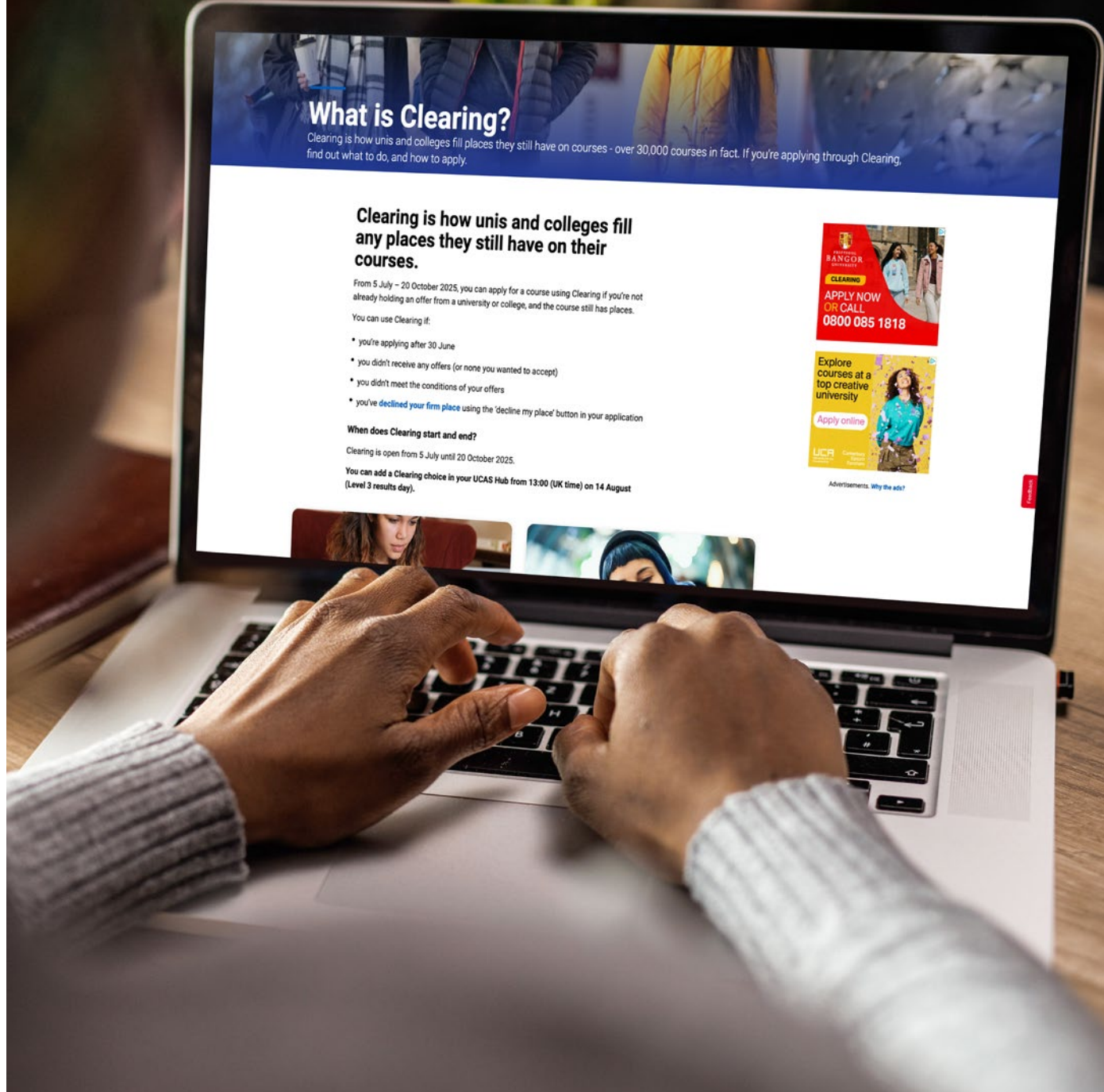
[Read more about Clearing.](#)

CLEARING PLUS

If all the choices feel overwhelming, applicants can find **Clearing matches**. Just click the button under **My Matches** in the Hub – it will automatically appear for applicants with no offers.

This tool matches applicants to what universities are looking for – including their qualifications, grades and preferred courses.

[Read more about Clearing matches.](#)



WATCH OUR VIDEO TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS DURING CLEARING

STEP 5

**GET READY
TO GO!**



FINANCES

If the applicant has applied for student finance, make sure their university and course details are correct with their student finance provider. Also check all bank details are up to date.

The first instalment is paid into the student's bank account once all documentation has been received and the university has confirmed attendance with the Student Loans Company.

Now is a good time to shop around for a student bank account and think about budgeting and money management – **we have some resources to help.**

STUDY

University study is different to school or college – students are expected to learn more independently.

We've created these **study skills guides** with the National Extension College (NEC) to help students prepare.

ACCOMMODATION

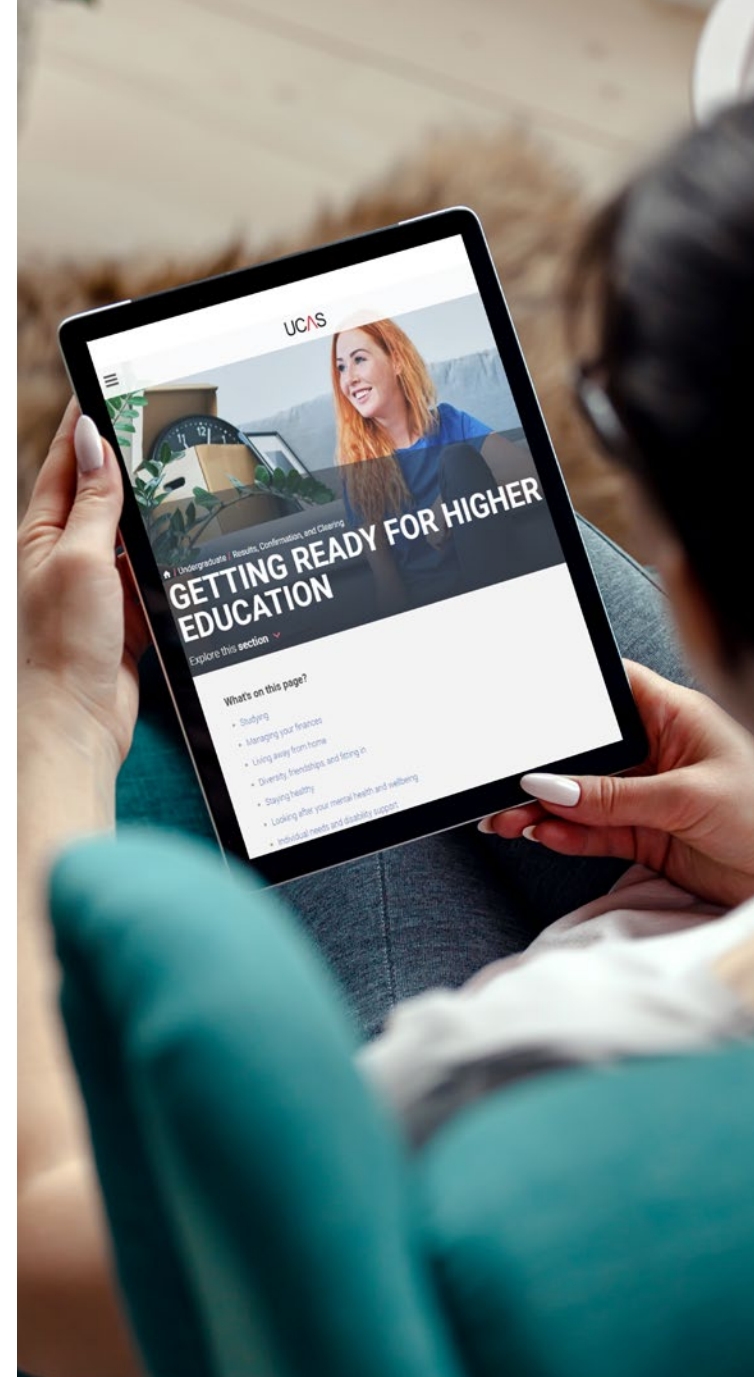
Those who are moving away may have already secured accommodation, or be starting to look now.

Also start to plan around insurance, bills, shopping and equipment (e.g. bedding and kitchen utensils), as well as how they will move to their new location.

GETTING SUPPORT AT UNIVERSITY

Make sure students know where to get support if they need it. The student support team is often the best place to start.

Find out about support at university and where to go for help.



READ ALL ABOUT WHAT TO DO AFTER RESULTS DAY

IF YOU NEED MORE HELP

UCAS Customer Experience Centre:

0371 468 0 468

08:30 – 18:00 (UK time) Mon to Fri

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[ucas_online](https://www.tiktok.com/ucas_online)



[@ucasonlineofficial](https://www.youtube.com/ucasonlineofficial)



[@ucas_online](https://www.snapchat.com/add/ucas_online)

Information for parents, carers and supporters

- ▶ [Read our parents/carers guide](#) for everything you need to support a young person with their higher education choices
- ▶ [Sign up for our parent/carers newsletter](#)

All applicants have a **Personal ID number** which they should quote whenever they contact UCAS – this is located on the top right of the application screen.

We can only talk to applicants about their application, unless they **nominate another person** we can talk to on their behalf. This can be done on the application form.

UCAS



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