

THE UCAS APPLICATION:

# THE SUPPORTER'S TOOLKIT: DISABLED APPLICANTS

A **step-by-step guide** to the UCAS process for anyone helping students with SEND and ALN 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

# MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR DISABLED APPLICANTS

## UCAS RESOURCES FOR DISABLED APPLICANTS

UCAS' complete guide to applying to higher education as a disabled student includes:

- ▶ Researching your choices
- ▶ A guide to speaking to the disability adviser or student support team
- ▶ Preparing for open days and visits
- ▶ Sharing a disability on the UCAS application
- ▶ Mental health and wellbeing support
- ▶ Support for disabled apprentices
- ▶ Support for neurodiverse apprentices

## OTHER ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTING DISABLED STUDENTS

UCAS works with the following organisations who offer expert information, advice and guidance:

- ▶ Disability Rights UK (DRUK)
- ▶ Disabled Students UK
- ▶ Advance HE / The Disabled Students' Commitment (DSC)
- ▶ LEAD Scotland
- ▶ Whizz Kidz
- ▶ The National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP)
- ▶ Student Minds
- ▶ The Charlie Waller Trust

# IMPORTANT CHANGES TO BE AWARE OF WHEN APPLYING

## DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE

In this guide, you'll see we use the term **disabled students** instead of 'special educational needs' or 'additional learning needs'. This is to match the language used in universities.

In higher education, 'disability' covers more conditions including: physical and mobility disabilities, learning differences, neurodiversity, long-term health conditions, and mental health.

Using the word 'disability' means students are protected under the Equality Act 2010 and that they are legally entitled to **reasonable adjustments**.

It doesn't matter if students identify as disabled, but they should be aware of the different language used so they don't miss important support.

## DIFFERENCES IN HOW SUPPORT IS ORGANISED

At school or college, students may have had an **EHCP** (Educational, Social and Health Plan) or similar, arranged through the **SENCO** (**ALNCO** in Scotland). These do not exist in higher education.

Information about a student's support needs will not automatically be shared with the university. Instead, students must let the university know, and discuss their needs with the **disability adviser** who will make arrangements.

This should be done as early as possible to make sure any adjustments are ready for the start of their studies – this can take some time to organise.

## DIFFERENCES IN THE TYPE OF SUPPORT

The support students will get in higher education may look and feel quite different. This is why it is important for them to talk to the disability adviser who will be able to tell them more.

**FIND OUT MORE**

From the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) and the University of Leeds, this [\*\*glossary and guide to the differences in terminology in higher education\*\*](#) will help you understand the changes

**NADP** 

**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

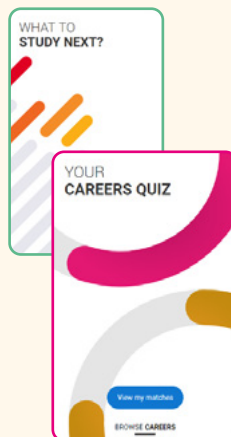


KPMG

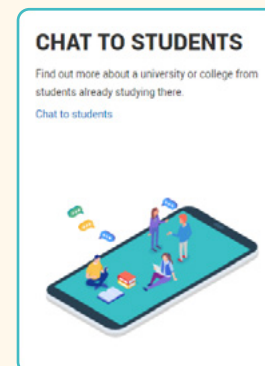


Construction, architecture, and the built environment

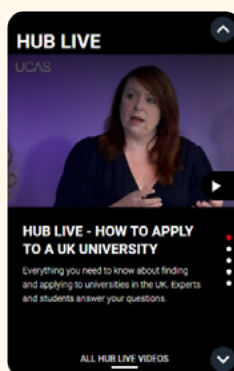
**Subject, industry and employer profiles** give details about different careers and options. Learn about and search for apprenticeships alongside degree courses.



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



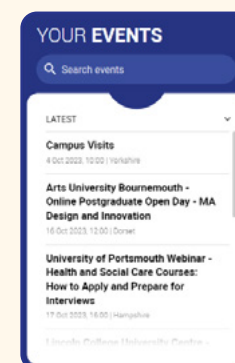
**Chat to students:** Find out what it's like to study at a particular university, or on a certain course with current students through UniBuddy.



**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

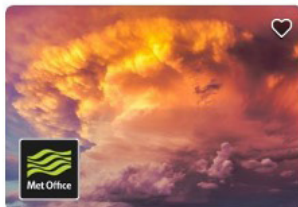
Filters

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

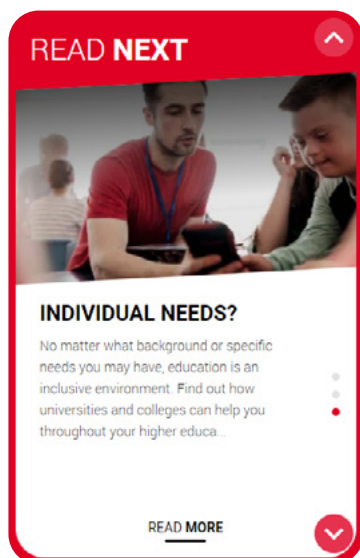
are real work experience opportunities offered by the world's leading employers across a range of careers. These incorporate real workplace activities and the chance to interact with industry professionals – all online and available now.



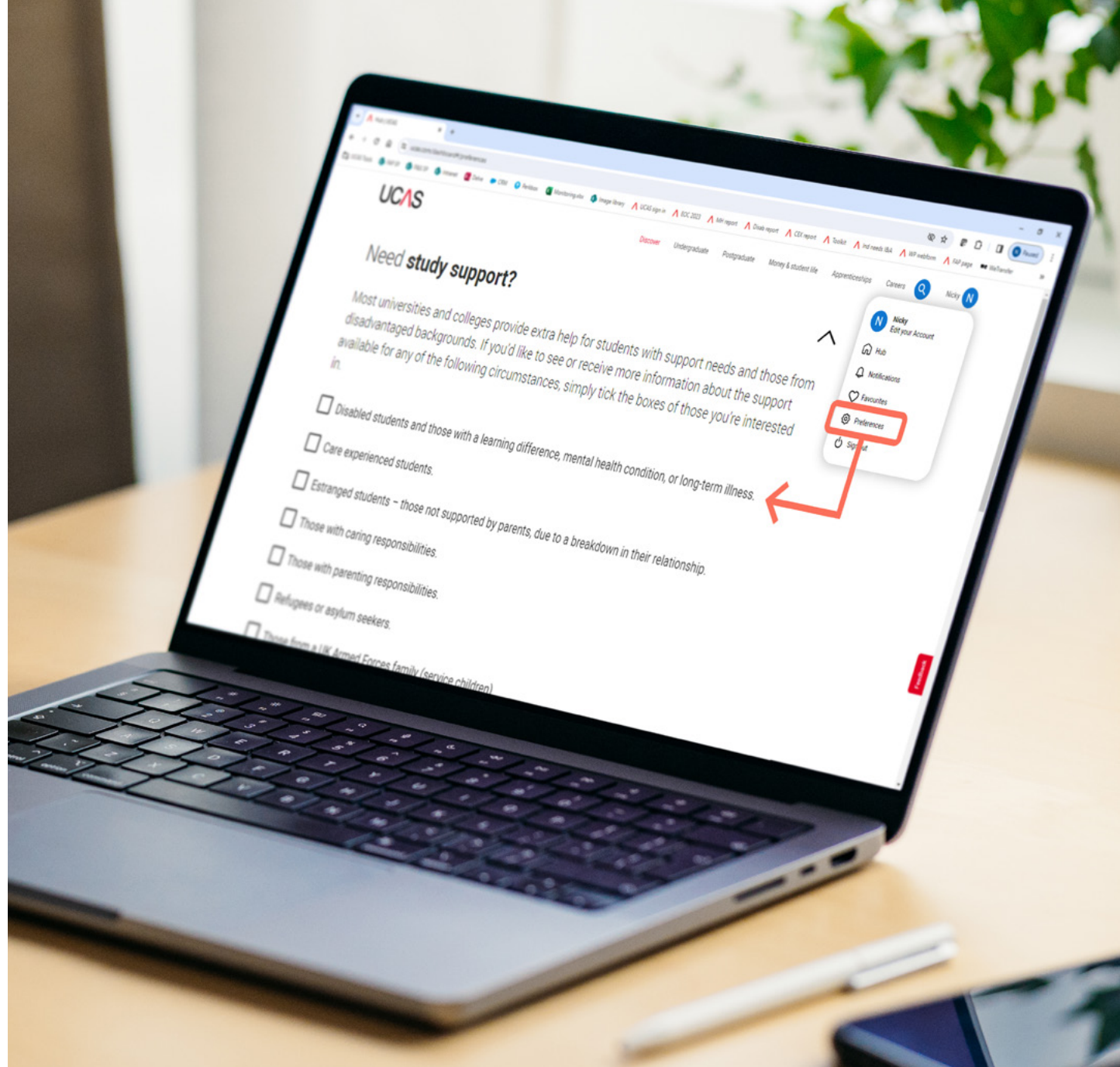
On completion of subject tasters and virtual work experiences, students will receive a completion certificate. Applicants may talk about these courses in their personal statement as evidence of their extra research into the subject area or career type.

# GET INFORMATION ABOUT SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

In the **Preferences** section (see right), tick the **disabled student box** (and any others that apply) to help UCAS show content the applicant will 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**

# HELP STUDENTS DISCUSS THEIR SUPPORT NEEDS WITH THE DISABILITY ADVISER EARLY ON

The university website probably won't give you all the information you need because every student will have different support requirements.

Students should speak to the **disability adviser** as early as possible to discuss support – even if they decide not to apply there.

If this feels daunting, we have a **guide to speaking to the disability adviser** to help students prepare for these conversations and ask the right questions.

## The application process

- If I share a disability or mental health condition on my UCAS application, who will see this information, and how will it be used?
- Will the university contact me for more information about my disability or condition, or to discuss my support or adjustment requirements in more detail? If so, when should I expect to hear from you?
- If I decide not to share via UCAS, will there be other opportunities to let the university know if I change my mind or decide I need support?
- If I am invited to an audition or interview, who do I speak to about accessibility arrangements?
- How do I register for disability support?
- Will I need to provide evidence to access any of the support or adjustments I need? If so, what evidence will you accept, and when do you need it?

## Transition and the start of term

- Will I be allocated an adviser to look after my needs, or will I be looked after by a team of people? Will I meet with them regularly?
- Is it possible for me to arrive before my course starts so I can get used to my new surroundings before other students arrive?
- Do you offer any events specifically for new students who are anxious about starting university or college, or to help them meet new people?
- Will any support or adjustments be in place for the start of term? If not, when can I expect them to be ready?
- What can I expect induction to cover, and how will it be managed?
- Will I have regular meetings with the disability adviser/mental health adviser/student support team throughout the course to make sure my adjustments and support are right?
- Will I have a support agreement outlining any reasonable adjustments? Is this shared with other staff in the university or college?
- Does the university provide (or help with) funding to obtain diagnostic evidence if I don't have what you need?

## Speaking to the disability adviser, mental health adviser or student support team

Universities and colleges have teams in place to make sure students are able to get the right support for their individual needs. This guide will help you get the information you need to make an informed decision.

This content was developed with support from LEAD Scotland, Diversity and Ability (D&A), and Disability Rights UK (DRUK).

Because support requirements are tailored and vary from student to student, you may not always find the specific level of detail you need from the website. We strongly recommend contacting the university or college directly to discuss your own circumstances and ask questions to understand how they can support you and decide if it is the right fit.

The student support team is always very happy to talk to prospective students – even if you decide not to apply there. You will find their contact details on the university website. Try to contact the team as far in advance as possible, as they can get busy at certain periods and may take longer to respond.

### Support in higher education is different to school

There are important differences in the support you may have received at school or college, and what you can access in higher education. While the university will arrange adjustments and support, you will be expected to speak to them about your requirements for them to do so. The National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) and



# WHAT IS THE DISABILITY ADVISER?

This is a specialist trained individual who arranges support at university. They can answer any questions, discuss students' support needs and organise adjustments (during the application, during their transition and during their studies).

Their contact details will be on the university website.

Working for a successful student journey for disabled students

**This blog article** from NADP explains how the disability adviser supports students in higher education.

# WHO ELSE CAN HELP?

For those still in school or college, the SENCO/ ALNCO may be able to help them set out the adjustments or support they have received which they can share with the university.



# 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)**

# SUPPORT STUDENTS TO ATTEND OPEN DAYS AND UCAS EXHIBITIONS

## OPEN DAYS

These events let you tour the campus and see the facilities first hand – especially helpful if students want to check **accessibility**. **Student ambassadors** are usually available and will be happy to answer questions.

Check if the **disability adviser** will be available for an appointment – they can tell you more about the sort of support available.

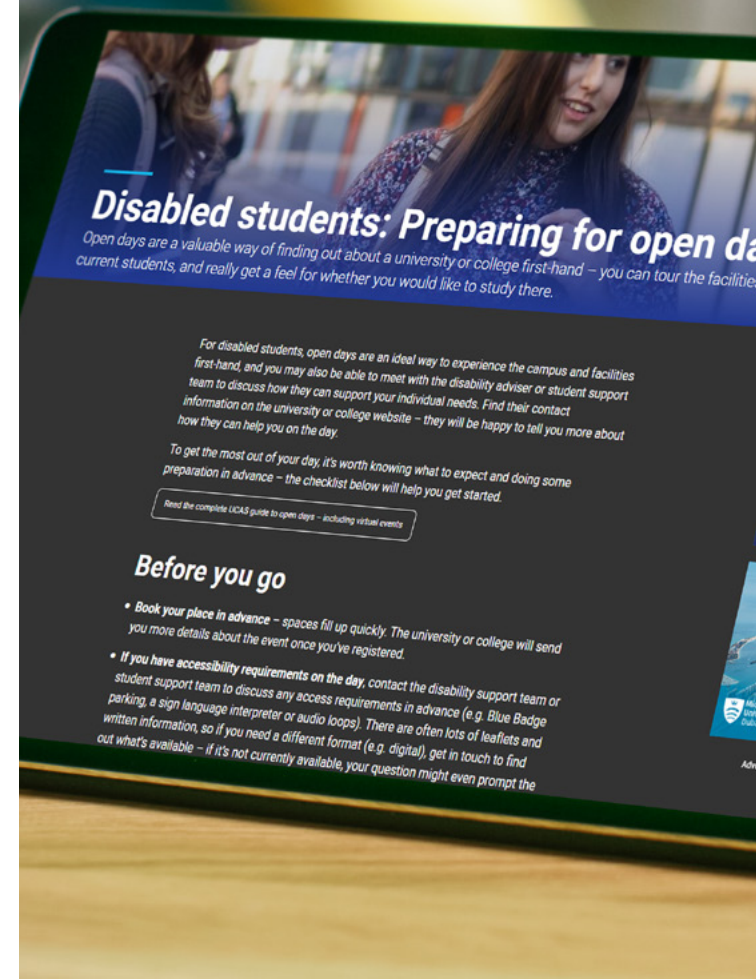
Let universities know of any **accessibility arrangements** to help the student attend (e.g. Blue Badge parking, hearing loops).

If the student finds busy events overwhelming, they may be able to arrange an individual visit to the campus. Some universities offer events specifically for **neurodiverse** students to look around.

## UCAS EXHIBITIONS

- ▶ All UCAS events are accessible for wheelchair users, and guide dogs are welcomed.
- ▶ A quiet zone is available for students to take time out, and earplugs are available at many events to help manage noise levels.
- ▶ Depending on venue, hearing loops are available on the UCAS stand and during UCAS presentations, with subtitles for live and recorded talks.
- ▶ Floor plans are available online ahead of the event, and printed on the day.

Check our **disabled students' guide to preparing for open days and visits** to get the most out of the event



## VIRTUAL TOURS

If students can't visit a university, they may be able to take a virtual tour. **Find a virtual tour**

# TOP TIPS TO HELP DISABLED APPLICANTS DISCOVER THEIR OPTIONS

CHALLENGE	WAYS TO HELP
<p><b><i>"Is university for me?"</i></b> Student feels overwhelmed by the practicalities, or wonders if they will fit in</p>	<p><b>Help the student feel this is possible by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ making sure they know they are not alone: approximately 1 in 5 students who apply to university each year share a disability or mental health condition on their UCAS application</li> <li>▶ asking the university's widening access and participation team about outreach programmes and activities to help students become familiar with higher education</li> <li>▶ suggesting they <b>try some Subject Tasters</b> to get a feel for university study</li> <li>▶ connecting them to a role model (e.g. through <b>UniBuddy</b>, mentoring, or case studies). Many universities have disabled student ambassadors who are happy to talk to prospective new students</li> <li>▶ encouraging them to follow UCAS' <b>social media</b> and <b>blogs</b> – here they will see a diverse range of students talking about their experiences and offering tips</li> <li>▶ getting them to listen to <b>The One in Five Podcast</b> – created by disabled students for disabled students who are considering higher education.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>"I won't be able to manage"</i></b> Student is worried about their ability to cope with the work and/or day-to-day life</p>	<p><b>Help the student feel in control by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ letting them know that universities want them to succeed and have support available (even for those without a diagnosed condition). This includes academic support but also help to manage their lifestyle, accommodation, and mental health and wellbeing. <b><u>More information about support here</u></b></li> <li>▶ the university will have a <b>disability adviser</b> (and usually a mental health adviser) who can answer your questions and make sure you get the support you need – throughout the application and during their studies</li> <li>▶ some universities hold transition or orientation events to help new students familiarise themselves with the campus before arrival</li> <li>▶ if they are planning to move away, help them to check health and social care services in the local area, where relevant</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>"I can't afford it"</i></b> Student is concerned about the cost of going to university</p>	<p><b>Ensure they understand that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>they can apply for student finance</b> to cover the cost of their tuition fees and maintenance</li> <li>▶ <b>the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)</b> covers additional study-related costs and doesn't have to be repaid – <b>check eligibility</b> and apply alongside student finance</li> <li>▶ they may be able to get <b>additional funding</b> through scholarships, grants and bursaries, and universities offer hardship funds to those who are finding it hard to make ends meet</li> <li>▶ Student money advisers are available on campus to help students with managing their finances, and UCAS' <b>managing money pages</b> will help students to prepare</li> </ul>

**STEP 2**

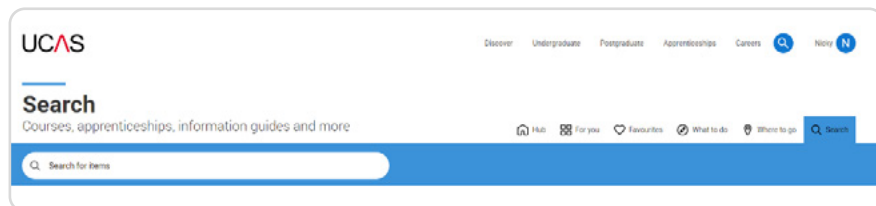
# **SEARCH AND SHORTLIST**



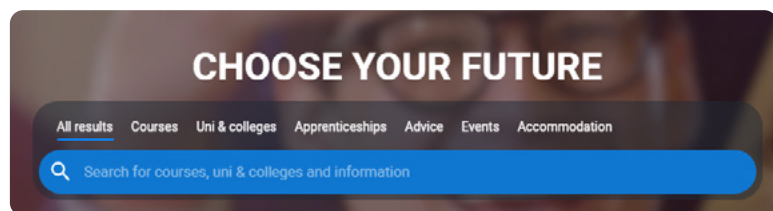
# HOW TO SEARCH

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

To find courses, you can either:



Search in the Hub



Use the blue search box on the homepage of [ucas.com](https://www.ucas.com)

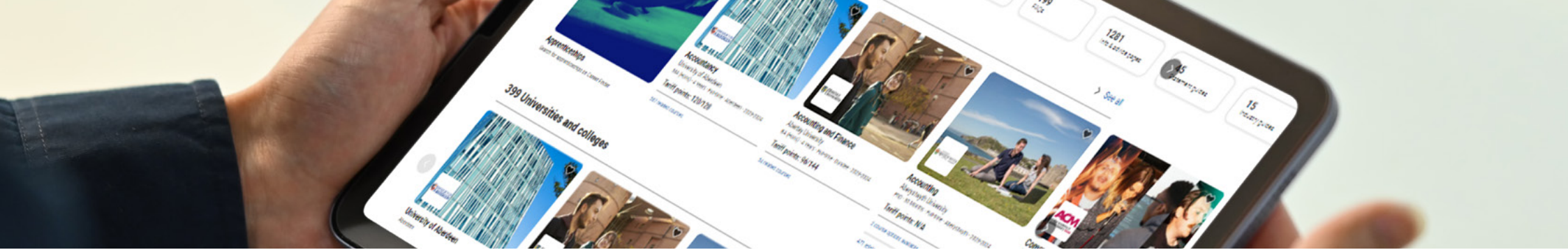
Students can search by:

- ▶ 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](#)

# TOP TIPS TO HELP DISABLED APPLICANTS SEARCH AND SHORTLIST

## What to remember when shortlisting universities:

- ▶ The **type and level of support** differs from one university to another – make sure the student speaks to the disability advisers before making their final choices. This is especially important if they have complex support needs.
- ▶ Remind students to check if courses have **work placements or off-site learning**, and to consider what support or adjustments they might need – and to speak to the university about this if they have any questions.
- ▶ Certain professional courses have **'fitness to practise'** requirements. Disabled students might have concerns but they are unlikely to be a barrier if the student is getting the right support. They are also entitled to reasonable adjustments to meet the requirements – check with the university for more information.
- ▶ Make sure they have researched the **learning and assessment styles** for their chosen courses before making any final choices – is this how they learn and perform best?
- ▶ Check the university website for the **disability adviser's contact details** (they may be called something else). They are happy to answer questions and give information during their application as well as when they are studying.

## DISABLED STUDENTS' RIGHTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Under the **Equality Act 2010**, universities and employers must make changes to ensure disabled people are able to access their courses and facilities. This is called 'reasonable adjustments'.

Read Disability Rights UK's comprehensive guide to [adjustments for disabled students and apprentices](#) and their useful [guide to understanding the Equality Act for disabled students](#).



**STEP 3**

**APPLY  
AND SEND**



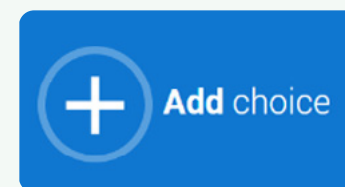
# HOW TO COMPLETE THE UCAS APPLICATION

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.

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](#)

# HELPING APPLICANTS SHARE A DISABILITY

Go to the 'More about you' Section in the Profile

## More about you

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

Start this section

## Why share a disability on the UCAS application?

Applicants might be unsure about sharing this information so it's important to reassure them that this is treated sensitively and only used to help them get the right support.

It is never used to make a decision about the application - [read the UCAS guide to sharing a disability or mental health condition](#) and see next page.

## What If the applicant chooses not to share?

This is entirely their decision, but make sure they know they can tell the university at any point if they change their mind.

Some students prefer to wait until they have an offer, but it's important to share early to make sure support and adjustments are ready for the start of term.

If they wait until they arrive, there may be a long delay or they may not be able to access all the support they need.

Select the relevant **disability** or **condition**

Every year, over 60,000 students with a physical and/or mental health condition, long-term illness, or learning difference apply through UCAS to study at a university or college in the UK, and access a range of support available to help with their studies, day-to-day activities, travel, or lifestyle. Would you consider yourself as living with any of the following: \*

None

A visual impairment uncorrected by glasses (e.g. blindness or partial sight)

A hearing impairment (e.g. deafness or partial hearing)

A long-term illness or health condition which may involve pain or cause fatigue, loss of concentration or breathing difficulties – including any effects from taking associated medication.

A mental health condition, challenge or disorder (e.g. anxiety or depression)

A learning difference (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, or AD(H)D)

A physical impairment or challenges with mobility (e.g. climbing stairs or uneven surfaces), or dexterity (e.g. using a keyboard or laboratory equipment)

A condition or impairment not listed (please give details in the box below)

Two or more impairments or conditions (please give details in the box below)

A social, behavioural or communication impairment (e.g. an autistic spectrum condition, Tourette's Syndrome, or speech and language difficulties including stammering)

# WHAT HAPPENS TO THE APPLICANT'S DISABILITY INFORMATION AFTER THE APPLICATION IS SENT?

1

Application is sent by UCAS to the universities' admissions departments.

This is sent securely. All health data is handled confidentially under UK-GDPR legislation.

2

Admissions staff assess the application. This is based on their academic aptitude (e.g. achieved or predicted grades) and potential to succeed on the course.

Information about an applicant's health is kept confidential and only accessible to those who are responsible for organising support – **it is not used to make an academic judgement.**

3

The applicant may be made an offer or invited to interview/audition.

If so, the information is transferred securely to the student support team where reasonable adjustments are organised, as necessary.

4

If the student accepts the offer, the disability adviser may get in touch to discuss support.

This could be a questionnaire, a visit to the university to arrange support, or more information about support services.

5

Before the start of term, the disability adviser may draft a support agreement.

This will set out any reasonable adjustments and be discussed with the student.

6

Before the course starts, the disability adviser will discuss sharing the support document with other members of staff.

This is only shared on a strict 'need to know' basis. This may include academic staff, the personal tutor, the accommodation team, library staff, and exams officers, as appropriate, and only with the student's permission.

# HELPING DISABLED APPLICANTS SHARE OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

## More about you

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

Start this section

In the **'More about you'** section, students can share any other circumstances and support needs.

If they are care experienced, they can share this in the Diversity and inclusion section.

## All information about personal circumstances will be:

- ▶ treated sensitively and only shared with those who arrange support.
- ▶ used positively – it is never used to decide whether to make an offer. Some applicants are worried about this so may need reassurance.

**Universities may get in touch for more information.** Some may require supporting evidence to give access to certain types of support – they will let you know what they need.



## Not sure about how to answer a question?

Check the detailed help text by clicking the blue question mark at the bottom of the page.

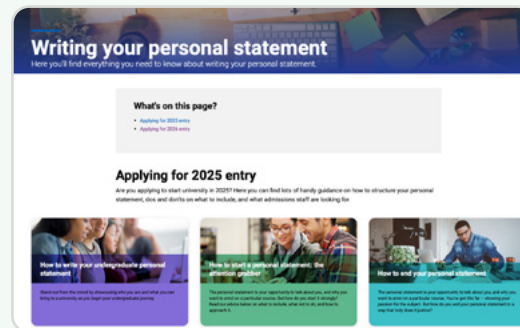




## THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

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?



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

## 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**

# TOP TIPS TO HELP DISABLED APPLICANTS APPLY AND SEND

## THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

The personal statement is the applicant's opportunity to explain their reasons for choosing that course, and show the skills they will bring. This is not where they should talk about their support needs. However, if it is relevant to their application, they can talk about their disability or condition – for some, this is an important part of their identity or educational journey.

They may want to show the positive ways their experiences have helped them develop particular skills, or shaped their ambitions or subject choices – but this is always a personal choice and they do not have to mention it if they don't want to.

**Get more with writing a personal statement**

## HELP NEURODIVERSE APPLICANTS FOCUS ON THEIR STRENGTHS

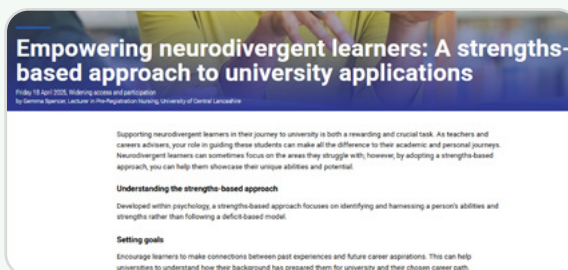
**Read a blog article from the University of Central Lancashire** which explains how to help neurodiverse young people identify their strengths and potential.

## THE REFERENCE

The reference has a section called 'extenuating circumstances' which is where the referee can explain anything that has affected the applicant's performance or grades. There are all sorts of extenuating circumstances – including those caused by a disability or condition (e.g. missed schooling or exams as a result of illness, injury or hospital treatment).

However, the referee should only include information about a disability with the applicant's permission – so make sure they've discussed this with their referee.

**More information about references**



# 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. We've teamed up with Diversity and Ability to create a [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](#).



# HELP STUDENTS APPLY FOR THE DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCE (DSA)

## What is the DSA?

DSA is funding for study-related support (e.g. specialist equipment, BSL interpreter, specialist mentoring). Students can apply for DSA alongside student finance but they won't receive money directly (except in **Scotland**). If approved, they will have an assessment to decide what support is needed - this will be arranged through a supplier.

[Read more about the DSA](#)

## Who can apply for DSA?

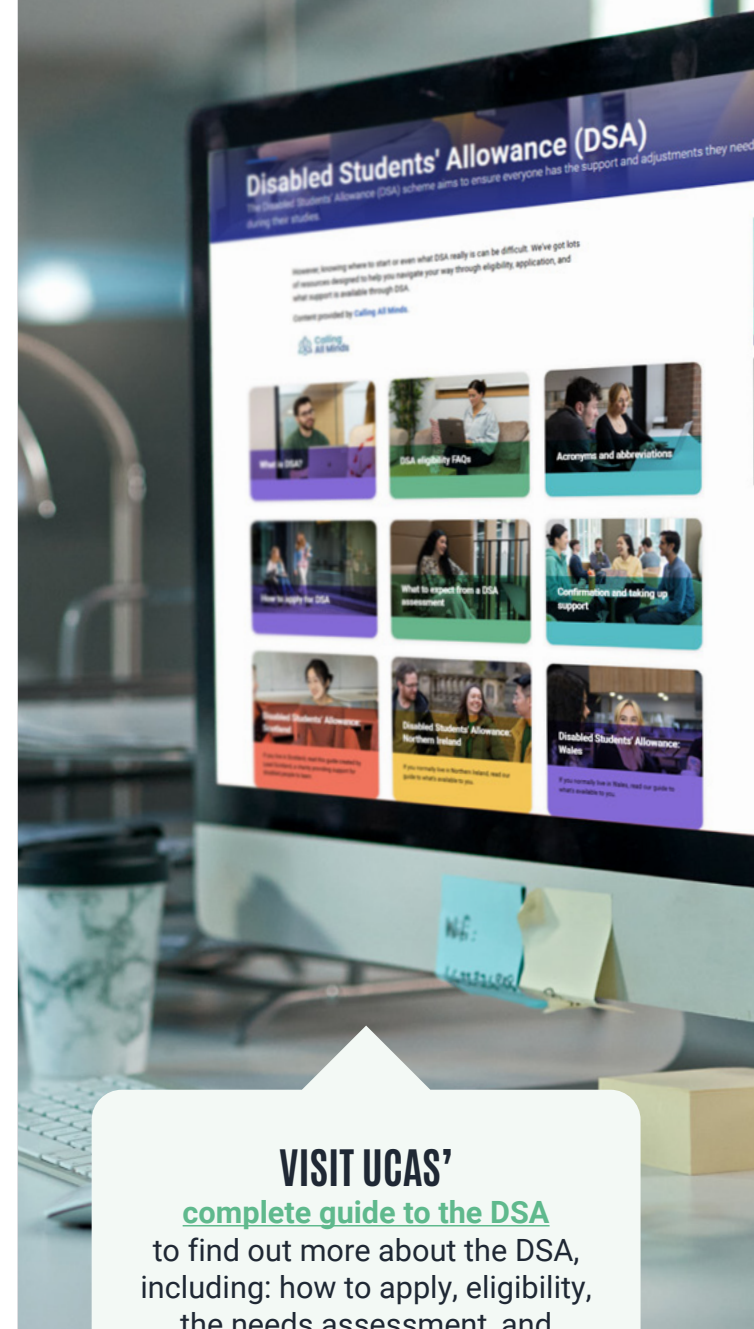
- ▶ **Full-time or part-time** UK students on a course lasting at least 1 year
- ▶ **Students with a disability** (including long-term health conditions, neurodiversity, mental health conditions, and/or learning differences).
- ▶ **Students will need to provide** evidence (e.g. doctor's report, diagnostic assessment)

[Read more about DSA eligibility](#)

## What is the needs assessment?

If students are invited to a needs assessment, it means they have been approved for the DSA. It is not a test – it is just a conversation to openly discuss their needs and possible barriers so the right support can be arranged. This might be in person or online.

[Read more and watch our video](#)



## VISIT UCAS'

[complete guide to the DSA](#)

to find out more about the DSA, including: how to apply, eligibility, the needs assessment, and differences around the UK



**IF A STUDENT IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR DSA, THEY MAY STILL BE ABLE TO GET SUPPORT THROUGH THEIR UNIVERSITY - CONTACT THEM DIRECTLY FOR FULL DETAILS**

**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:

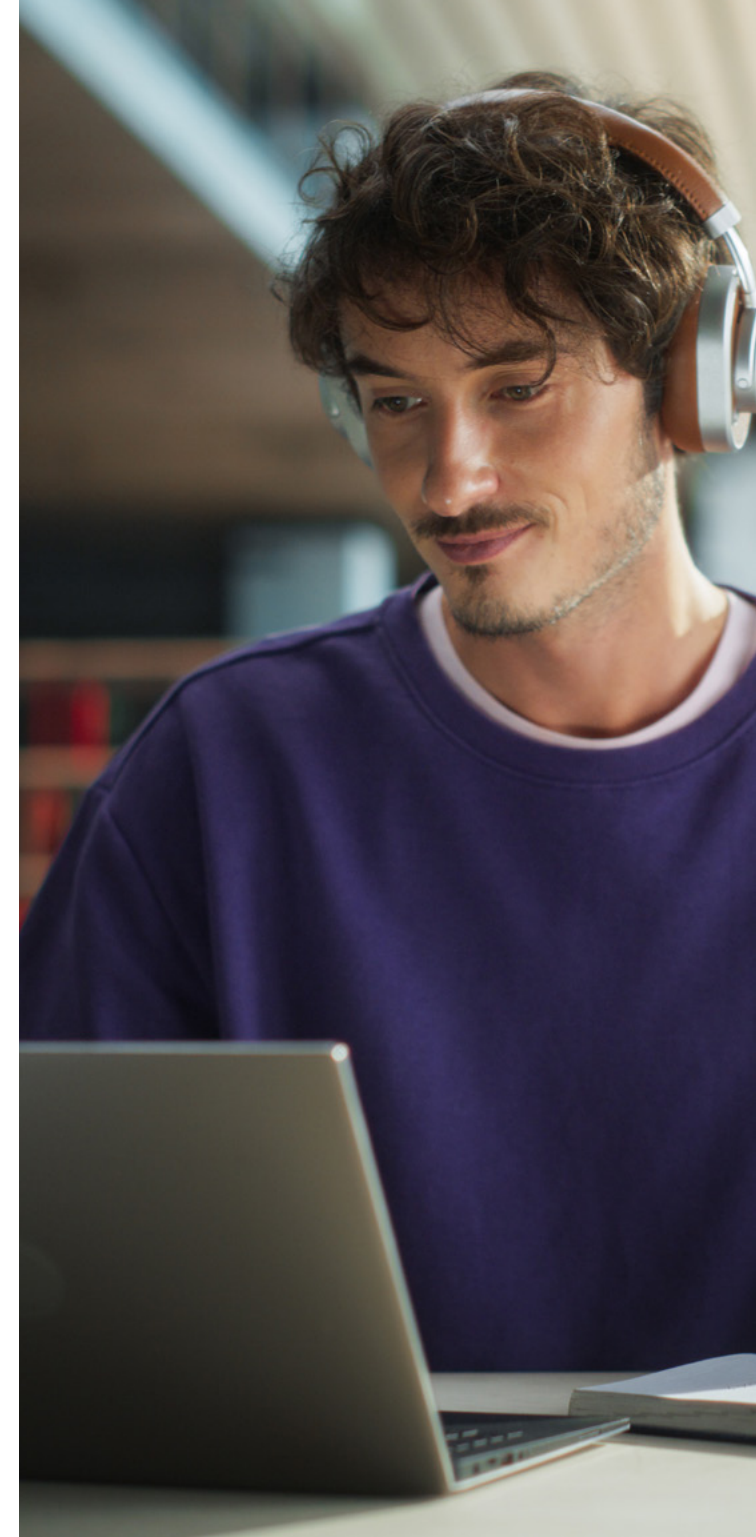
- ▶ **Conditional offer** – the applicant has a place if they meet certain requirements (e.g. exam grades).
- ▶ **Unconditional offer** – the applicant has been accepted and the place is theirs if they want it.
- ▶ **Unsuccessful** – the university has decided to not offer the applicant a place. They 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).

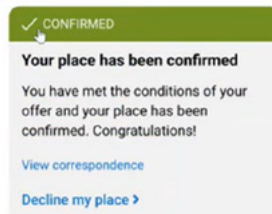
**Read more about Extra choices**



**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

# TOP TIPS TO HELP DISABLED APPLICANTS HANDLE DECISIONS AND OFFERS



## INTERVIEWS AND AUDITIONS

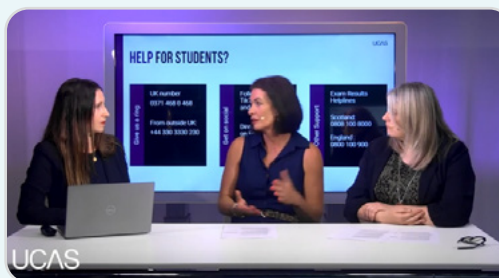
Make sure the applicant contacts the disability adviser in advance to arrange any accessibility requirements.



## RESULTS DAY

**This blog from the University of Central Lancashire** can help you to support neurodiverse young people during a stressful time.

Watch our **Adviser Live video** focusing on supporting students during results day. Along with general tips and advice, we also give some tips on supporting neurodiverse students to consider their options and prepare.



## USING CLEARING

There won't be much time to discuss support during Clearing, and there may be delays in putting support in place, particularly if the applicant's support needs are complex. However, most campuses and courses are already accessible, so using Clearing may not present any challenges.

**We strongly recommend the applicant discusses their support needs during any Clearing conversations before accepting a place to make sure they get the right support.**

Encourage student to have a back-up list of suitable alternative universities that can support their needs. They can still contact them for advice, and they'll feel more prepared for 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

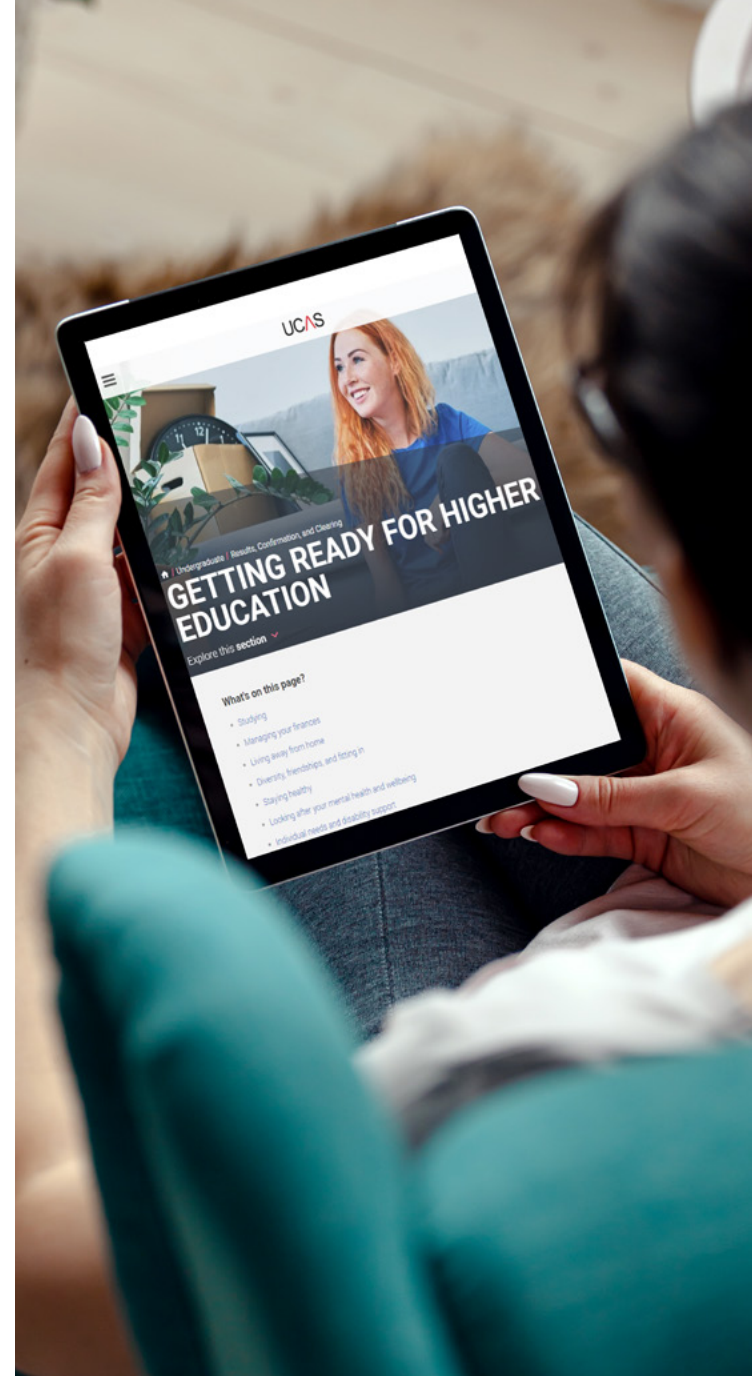
Those who are moving away may have already secured accommodation, or be starting to look now.

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**

# TOP TIPS TO HELP DISABLED STUDENTS GET READY TO GO!

## If their support needs change

Speak to the disability adviser as soon as possible. If they have applied for DSA, they should also contact the needs assessment centre (their details will be on the needs assessment).

## PRACTICAL THINGS TO THINK ABOUT NOW



**Budgeting and bank accounts**



**Travel plans, journey times, and parking**



**Equipment, books, software**



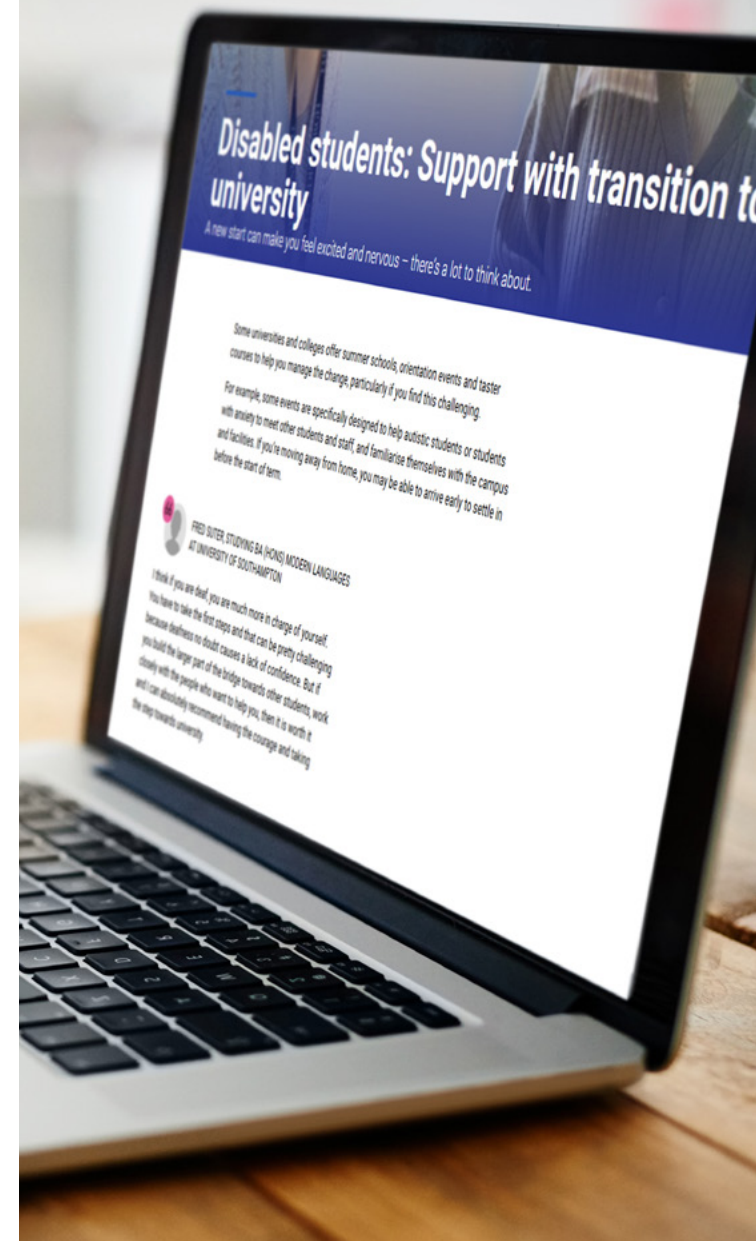
**Study skills and pre-reading**



**Cooking skills**



**Healthcare, GPs, dentists, prescriptions**



**[READ OUR GUIDE](#) TO PREPARING FOR THE TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY**

# EXPERT RESOURCES TO HELP MANAGE THE TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY

**student  
minds**



**Student Minds** is the leading charity for student mental health. There are many tools and resources to help students manage their mental health and wellbeing – including some great guides for new students:

- ▶ **Know Before You Go** helps students prepare for university life.
- ▶ **Transitions into University** - this guide helps new students navigate university life and settle in.

The **Charlie Waller Trust** supports young people with many aspects of mental health and wellbeing, including guides on managing the transition to university.

- ▶ **Explore their 'Life transitions' resources.**



# MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Visit UCAS' complete guide to mental health and wellbeing support at university

## Support for mental health at university

Most universities have a wellbeing team and mental health adviser – a specialist in supporting students with mental health difficulties (diagnosed or not).

- **This video** from the University Mental Health Advisers Network (UMHAN) explains what they do and how they can help.



## IF YOU NEED MORE HELP

UCAS Customer Experience Centre:

**0371 468 0 468**

08:30 – 18:00 (UK time) Mon to Fri

Follow us on social media:



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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