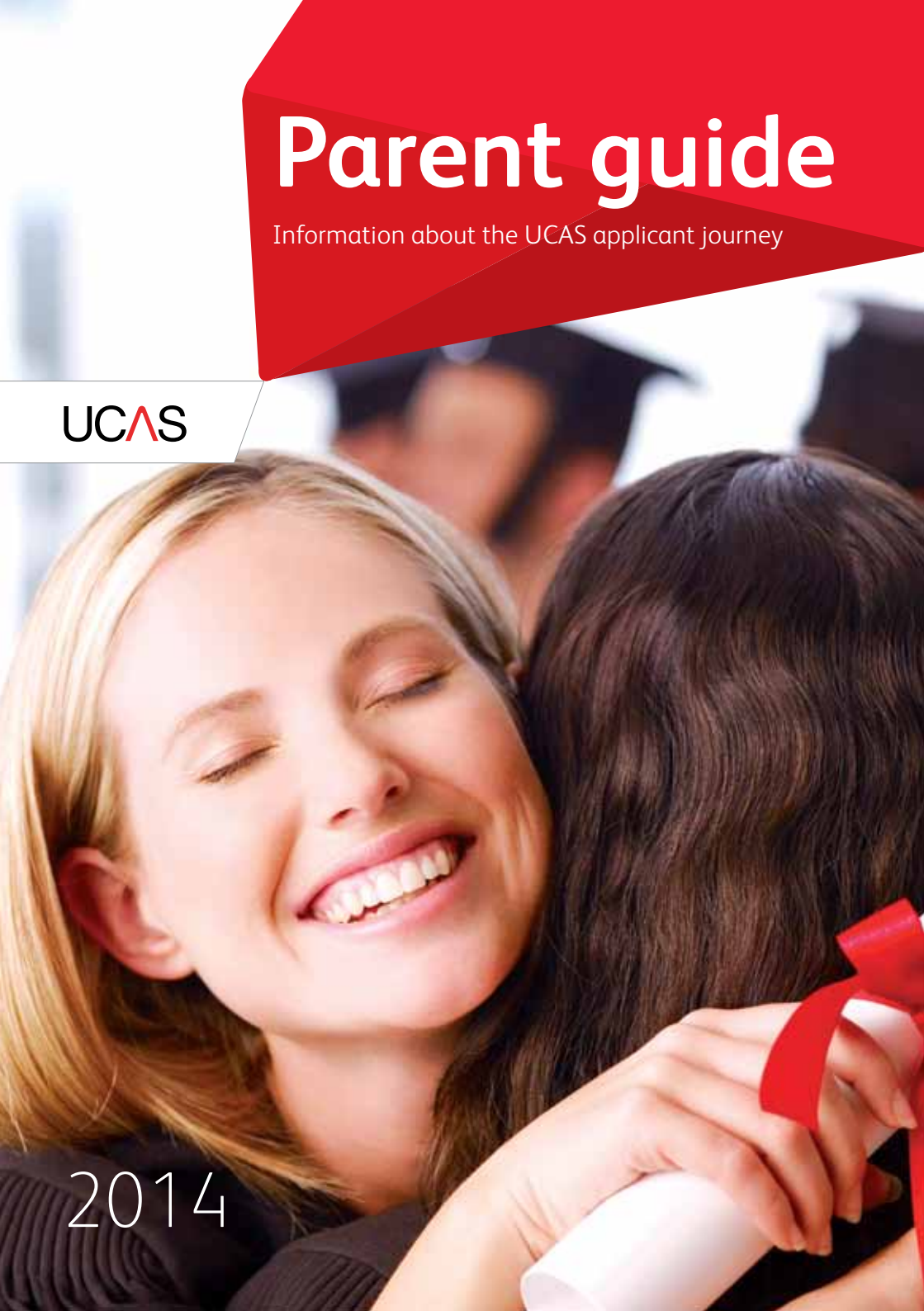


Parent guide

Information about the UCAS applicant journey

UCAS

2014



Getting into university

The **10** things your son or daughter needs to do...

- Begin **research** early and focus on courses of interest
- Know the UCAS **deadlines** (see overleaf)
- **Register** for UCAS Card
- **Search for courses** at www.ucas.com
- Visit university and college **open days**
- Attend a **UCAS convention**
- Check **entry requirements**
- Write several drafts of the **personal statement**
- Understand **student finance**
- Understand how **Extra** and **Clearing** work

Earn under
£21K
and you'll
never repay

And don't forget...

UCAS is here to help –

just register for our parent newsletters at www.ucas.com/parentform

The key dates...

2013

Mid-September Applications can be submitted to UCAS.

15 October Deadline for applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge and applications for medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and veterinary science.

2014

15 January Deadline for application to all courses except those listed with a 15 October or 24 March deadline.

25 February Extra opens.

24 March Deadline for applications to art and design courses except those listed with a 15 January deadline.

Applications received after the above deadlines will still be forwarded to universities, providing they have vacancies, but they are not obliged to consider them.

30 June Last date for receipt of applications at UCAS. All applications received later are automatically entered into Clearing.

Early August SQA results are published and Scottish Clearing vacancy information service starts.

14 August GCE A level, Advanced Diploma and PreU results are published and full Clearing information service starts.

20 September Last receipt of applications through Apply.

Make sure you speak to your child's school or college as they may have their own deadlines which will often be earlier than those above.

There will also be specified cut-off dates for replying to offers – details can be found on

www.ucas.com

A world of opportunity...

...is waiting at Coventry University.

We're a university that's going from strength to strength and this is endorsed by our students. According to the National Student Survey 2012 we are in the top 5 of modern universities for student satisfaction.

94% of our graduates are in employment or further study and we recently featured in the top ten of all UK universities for offering 'best value' to students (Source: Student Value for Money Report 2012).

We're rising up the independent university league tables because we put great teaching and academic facilities first in our list of priorities.

With our clear fees policy and innovative campus developments we've got the complete package to offer students a route to a successful future. To find out more visit **www.coventry.ac.uk** or book onto one of our open days.

www.coventry.ac.uk



94%
employability
or further
study rate

Source: DLHE 2009/10

**2011
THE AWARDS
WINNER**

ENTREPRENEURIAL
UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR
&
OUTSTANDING SUPPORT
FOR STUDENTS



**Coventry
University**

Welcome

This guide is to help you as the parent, guardian or grandparent of an applicant to university or college. It aims to help you support your son, daughter, ward or grandchild on their UCAS applicant journey. We will not give loads of information about every step, but concentrate on the early stages when you are both finding your way. We will also tell you where to find further information when you need it.

As a responsible adult, you are important because the applicant will partly rely on your guidance and experience. But it is important the applicant make their own decisions.

Though they may not always show it, your encouragement and support are invaluable to them as they explore the next step in their education and life.

Contents

This guide will give you detailed information about the early stages of deciding to go to university or college, and explain what an applicant has to do to before and while making an application.

- Decide what to do after leaving school
- Understand higher education

- Research universities and courses, and their course entry requirements
- Complete the UCAS application



AS A RESPONSIBLE ADULT,
YOU ARE IMPORTANT
BECAUSE THE APPLICANT
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YOUR GUIDANCE AND
EXPERIENCE

We then take you through the later stages so that you know what to expect later on. We include flowcharts and timelines of important dates, and at the end our hints and tips on successfully getting through the process.

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**GETTING
STARTED**

Why higher education?

You'll probably be asking this question, and so will your son or daughter. The short answer is that it will probably make the rest of their lives both more interesting and better paid.

Get further information about how higher education can help with building a career from the National Careers Service (<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>) or your local careers service.

What's it like?

Higher education courses usually last three or four years.

- A university education develops all-round skills, such as independent learning, communication, intellectual and research skills, and IT. Nowadays such skills are more essential than ever.
- University is also a good time for young people to find their feet in the wider world. There are opportunities for learning and socialising with a wide variety of people (including students from outside the UK and those studying very different courses), travel, taking part in cultural events and meeting potential employers. University opens up opportunities for all.

Costs...

Going to university can be expensive – many students work part-time to help fund their everyday needs. And then there is the question of tuition fees which are currently up to £9,000 a year. More about how they can manage this is on page 19.

Timing...

Higher education also takes time out from starting a career. Some young people feel they need a break after so many years of school education, and some are anxious to start work. Some are nervous about leaving home. Some students go to university after a gap year, which can cure itchy feet and reassure you and the applicant that they are mature enough to undertake the course they want.

...and benefits

The benefits are massive! Besides higher earnings and better career prospects, higher education helps the next generation learn new things, take charge of their choices and get to where they want to be. Society as a whole benefits from having a well-educated workforce, and employers value graduates and often target them in their recruitment campaigns. Some careers are simply impossible to enter without a relevant degree. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), the body which checks that universities offer good quality courses, says that that a university education should enhance goals and ambitions, self-confidence, perseverance and creativity – all qualities that are good for every walk of life, not just employment.

Raising the standard.



AFFORDABLE
QUALITY
EDUCATION

At London Metropolitan University we believe that everyone has the right to an affordable quality education. Our courses have been given the top rating for quality by the UK's Quality Standards Agency. Yet with fees still significantly lower than other institutions, we offer genuine value for money. It's a commitment to our students that will never change.

We now have over one thousand £3,000 scholarships, including £1,000 cash in your first year of study to help fund your education.*

No1 for highest graduate starting salaries among modern universities.
Sunday Times University Guide 2013

To see all of our undergraduate courses visit londonmet.ac.uk/ug

* See www.londonmet.ac.uk/nsp for conditions

What is UCAS?

What we do

UCAS is the service that processes applications to full-time courses at university and college. We check applications are complete then forward them to the applicant's chosen institutions. The admissions tutors make their decisions and notify us, and we let applicants know whether they are being offered a place on their course and whether this is dependent upon exam results.



www.ucas.com

How we can help

The UCAS website is the place to start when you have any query about applying to university. It has pages that will help you understand and support how your children are progressing along their UCAS applicant journey. There are even parent bloggers writing about their experiences.

Parents can also sign up for the UCAS monthly email written specially from a parent's point of view – see page 7 for more information about other ways we can help you and your son or daughter.



Do you know your Tariff Points from your UCAS Codes? Your UF from your CF?

ParentSpace can help you.

ParentSpace gives you information on how to survive the university application process. We have tips on how to get the most out of Open Days and how to balance the cost of university. We also have interviews with parents and a jargon buster to help you keep up with all the terminology.



To sign up for your
FREE copy, visit
www.glam.ac.uk/parents
or call our Parents' Hotline
on **08455 194 553**.

UNIVERSITY OF • PRIFYSGOL
Glamorgan
Morgannwg
CARDIFF • PONTYPRIDD • CAERDYDD

Getting help online

Sign up for parent information!

Register with UCAS at www.ucas.com/parents/register for free regular email newsletters written specially for parents. We want to help you give the best support possible to your son or daughter during their application journey. We will send you an email newsletter every month with information, advice and news relevant to each stage of the application cycle.

All you have to fill in is your name and contact details, and the date your child is planning to start university.

UCAS Card

Accessing information about options post-16 can be a bit of a minefield. By signing up to UCAS Card, your son or daughter gets advice straight to their inbox to help with research on their next move.

What they get:

- monthly newsletters from UCAS to help them keep on track with their application and the relevant deadlines
- advice on the other options available and where to find out more
- information from universities, matched to their career and study ambitions
- discounts and offers on the high street, online and at major attractions nationwide.

Visit www.ucas.com/ucascard to register today.

Website and social channels

If you have questions or problems with the application process, the best place to go is our website. Visit www.ucas.com to find information about the entire process, from choosing a course to starting study and everything in between.

If you need to get in touch with us, you or your son or daughter can get help from UCAS on Twitter and Facebook where our advisers are waiting for your questions, watch our videos on YouTube and across our website, and follow our applicant and parent blogs for even more insight from others going through the process.



www.twitter.com/ucas_online



www.facebook.com/ucasonline



www.youtube.com/ucasonline



www.ucasconnect.com



www.ucas.com

Advice is available by telephone too, on 0871 468 0 468, but you can usually save yourself the call by using our online services.



CHOOSING COURSES AND APPLYING

Choosing courses

Higher education, or HE, means studying for qualifications such as undergraduate degrees, higher national diplomas or foundation degrees. Students taking HE courses are usually aged 18 or over.

Getting started

The first thing to think about is what subject areas your son or daughter enjoys and would be keen to study in depth.

HE courses are available in a huge range of subjects offered by universities and can be combined in sometimes surprising ways. Here are some examples of areas of interest and courses that might match.

- Current news stories and history
 - War and society
- Justice and the treatment of offenders
 - Sports studies with criminology
- Science and engineering
 - Aircraft maintenance repair and overhaul
- Languages can be included in many combinations, for example: *Divinity & French*, *Russian studies & business studies*, *Film & media with Spanish*.

Many subjects can be started at university, for instance subjects where applicants are unlikely to have an equivalent A level, though they will be expected to prove they have potential. These include archaeology (universities will look for a practical interest in history and objects), architecture (where

they will want evidence of an ability to express ideas in pictures and diagrams) or languages (for instance someone with an A level in one language can often study another from scratch). University admissions tutors are usually happy to talk to you about what would be acceptable.



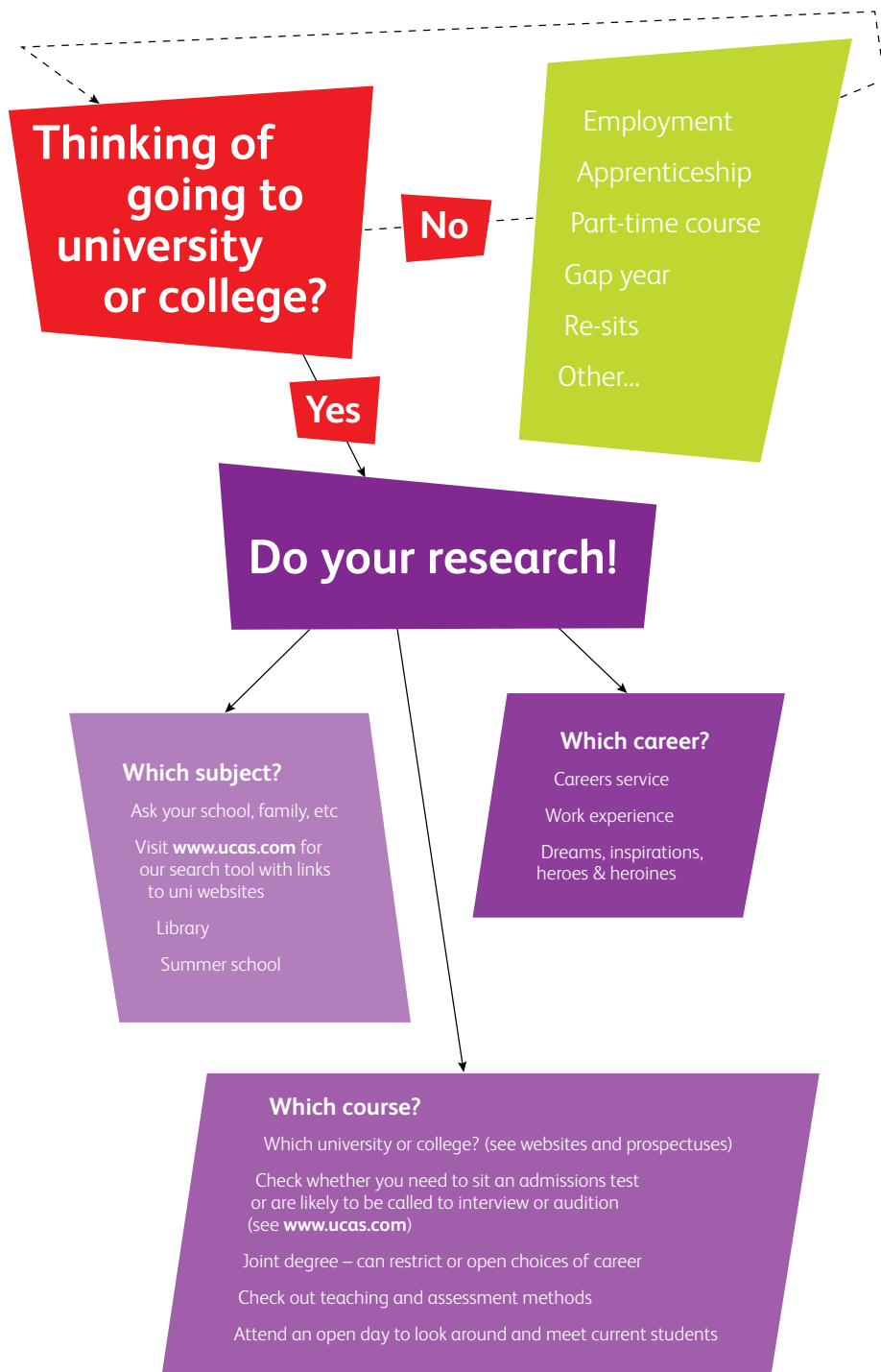
HE COURSES ARE
AVAILABLE IN A HUGE
RANGE OF SUBJECTS



Most courses in England, Wales and Northern Ireland take three years to complete. In Scotland it is usually four years. Language students often take an extra year, which is spent abroad working in a country where the language is spoken, or if they are studying two languages, they live for six months in each country. Sometimes a year abroad is part of a non-language degree, for example, international business management

HE qualifications

When people think about HE, they tend to assume it is all about degree courses but there are several qualifications that can be gained. Check our jargon buster at www.ucas.com/students/wheretostart/heexplained/coursetypes.



Choosing courses

All universities and colleges in the UCAS scheme are listed on our website at www.ucas.com. Each place will also have its own prospectus and website that your son or daughter can look at, but remember that they will all be painting a rosy picture!

Open days and UCAS conventions

One of the best ways to get an independent view is to see for yourself – encourage your son or daughter to go to open days at the institutions where they are thinking of applying. Then they'll get a chance to see what is on offer and whether they feel they could be happy spending three or four years in the place. They might prefer to go alone; in which case discuss with them the information they'll be looking for and questions they should ask. If they forget to ask a question, they can always telephone with further queries.

“

THEN THEY'LL GET A CHANCE TO SEE WHAT IS ON OFFER AND WHETHER THEY FEEL THEY COULD BE HAPPY SPENDING THREE OR FOUR YEARS IN THE PLACE”

You can also use www.ucas.com to find conventions and exhibitions run by UCAS. These are events where you can speak to individual universities about their requirements and what they offer, and attend seminars on a wide variety of subjects such as student finance, applying to Scottish universities, and writing a winning personal statement.

League tables

Many people want to know what is the best university or college. The truth is that there is no one course or institution which is perfect for everybody. Similarly, university league tables don't often agree as they award points for very different criteria and use different weightings according to what their editors happen to believe is most important. League tables can be found at the following websites:

- www.guardian.co.uk/education/universityguide
- www.thetimes.co.uk/good_uni_guide (subscription service)
- www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk

These tables reveal a lot about other people's opinions, but the most important thing is whether a university or college will suit your son or daughter, and the best way to work that out is to get a feel for the place and work from there.

Choosing courses

Entry requirements

The entry requirements for each course are in the UCAS search tool listed on www.ucas.com. This will give you an idea of what grades will probably be required in A level or International Baccalaureate or Scottish Higher exams. It will also tell you if certain subjects will not be counted, or if there are other requirements. It is worthwhile checking on the website of the university as well, where their general entry policy will help explain their approach to making offers.

Universities will also consider other factors, such as work experience or extra-curricular, so meeting the published grade requirements is not a guarantee of an offer.

Making the right choice

Your son or daughter needs to have a realistic view of their predicted grades. These should guide them in their choices of where to apply. They should normally apply to a range of universities so that if their grades are better or lower than predicted they are still likely to have a chance of a place.

There are plenty of other factors in getting the choice right for your child. It can be hard to reach a point where both you and your son or daughter is completely happy. It may not be the course alone that would help them have a great experience.

Other things to consider include:

- small or large institution
- distance from home
- sports facilities
- city or country location
- course facilities (labs, libraries, tutor access)
- nightlife and social life
- accommodation available
- activities, clubs and societies.

If nerves are holding your son or daughter back from applying to university, they can always apply to one nearby and live at home. But if they investigate they will find plenty of universities with very good support networks for their students.

If your son or daughter has a disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty, it's a good idea to contact universities and colleges to discuss any support they might need before sending their application to us. Most universities and colleges have disability coordinators or advisers who will be happy to help. Most also publish details of their provision for disabled students on their website.

Choosing courses

Course fees

Nowadays universities can legally charge up to £9,000 annually for tuition fees for their courses. Privately run universities may charge more as the Government's tuition fee limit does not apply to them. However, students at these institutions may be eligible for a tuition fee loan of up to £6,000. International students can be charged more.



IT MAY NOT BE THE
COURSE ALONE THAT
WOULD HELP THEM HAVE
A GREAT EXPERIENCE

Applicants will need to be clear about how they will fund payment of these fees. For up-to-date information see **www.moneysavingexpert.com** and look at the information on student finance on pages 19 and 21.

Don't forget that some courses have extra expenses too, such as costumes for drama, protective wear for engineering or archaeology, or travel for languages or hospitality courses.

Useful resources

International students

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying
www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/immigration.php

Lifestyle and accommodation

www.telegraph.co.uk/education/universityeducation/student-life
www.thesac.org.uk
www.nationalcode.org
www.brightknowledge.org
www.studential.com

Gap year

www.gapyear.com
www.carolinesrainbowfoundation.org

Finances

www.moneysavingexpert.com/students
www.nasma.org.uk

UCAS

www.ucas.com

Don't just secure a place
**SECURE A
FUTURE**

Come and meet us



Our Student Services Team is rated the best in the country (The Times Higher Education Awards 2012) and 4 out of 5 of our graduates entering the workplace start out in managerial or professional roles. Come and see us to find out more.

For a full list of all our Open Days visit our website:

www.anglia.ac.uk/more



**Anglia Ruskin
University**

Cambridge Chelmsford Peterborough

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graph TD; A[Go to www.ucas.com/students/apply] --> B[Second and future visits]; A -.-> C[Click on Register and complete the details requested. They will need their username and password to finish their application]; B --> D[Log in to fill in all sections of Apply]; D --> E[When do they need to apply by?]; E --> F[Deadlines]; F --> G[What happens next?]; G --> H[UCAS processes their application into our central system<br/>UCAS sends them a Welcome letter which lists their choices in random order<br/>UCAS sends their application to their chosen universities and colleges for them to consider<br/>Universities and colleges tell UCAS their decisions];
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Go to
www.ucas.com/students/apply

Second and future visits

Click on Register and complete the details requested. They will need their username and password to finish their application

Log in to fill in all sections of Apply

When do they need to apply by?

Deadlines

15 October – Medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, veterinary medicine and all applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge

15 January – all other courses except certain art and design courses using 24 March deadline

24 March – Certain art and design courses (check on the UCAS search tool)

After 30 June applications go straight into Clearing

What happens next?

UCAS processes their application into our central system

UCAS sends them a Welcome letter which lists their choices in random order

UCAS sends their application to their chosen universities and colleges for them to consider

Universities and colleges tell UCAS their decisions

How to apply

Your son or daughter will apply online through the UCAS application service Apply, at www.ucas.com/apply. This will be available at school if internet access is not possible from home.

If your son or daughter is still at school or college then they must make their application through the school or college. Your son or daughter will fill in their online application, which has seven sections:

- Personal details
- Additional information (UK applicants only)
- Student finance (UK applicants only)
- Choices
- Education
- Employment
- Personal statement
- Reference (independent applicants only)

Use of choices

A maximum of five choices is available. Some students make just one choice at a local university or if their course is so unusual that only one university offers it; most pick the same subject at five different places. You do not need to use all of your choices at once. However if you wish to add further choices, then we recommend you do so before their specific deadlines.

Making the right choice of institution matters – students should apply only to places they can picture themselves going to, otherwise they are wasting a choice. If they

apply to less than five places, they may be able to add others later as long as they have not accepted an offer elsewhere. If they end up without any offers in the spring they may be able to add choices through UCAS Extra (see page 25).

There are deadlines for their application – see page 23 for the main deadlines and important dates.



STUDENTS SHOULD
APPLY ONLY TO PLACES
THEY CAN PICTURE
THEMSELVES
GOING TO

The deadline for each course is given in our UCAS search tool. Applications received after the deadline but before 30 June may still be considered by the university or college provided they still have places available.

References

The last addition to the application is the reference, which is often supplied by the school who will usually discuss their reference with your son or daughter. If your son or daughter has left school this can be supplied by an independent referee.

Personal statement

The personal statement is a short piece of writing by the applicant explaining why they are applying and why their chosen institutions should consider them. It is the only chance your son or daughter will have to speak in their own voice.

Encourage them to find out exactly what the universities and colleges are looking for using our UCAS search tool at www.ucas.com and the universities' websites. To help prepare, they could list key points, strengths and evidence they have to justify why they have chosen the subject. Well before the deadline, they should write a first draft and show it to their teacher and friends and to you. Here is a list of what it could contain.

- **What interests them about the subject?**
They need to show they understand what is required to study the course
- **Why they're suitable** to take the course – list their skills and experiences and show why university or college is the next logical step
- If they're applying to several different courses, it can be hard to make the personal statement fit them all properly. They could look for **common themes** and requirements and write about those.
- **Demonstrate maturity** and include positions of responsibility and achievements (swimming certificates, music exams, voluntary activity, school play or orchestra)

- Do their **hobbies, interests and social activities** help demonstrate their suitability for the course?
- **Work experience**, including voluntary work. They should try to link what they did to qualities mentioned in the entry profiles.
- **Future plans** including what they want to do at the next stage of their life after university.



WELL BEFORE THE DEADLINE THEY SHOULD WRITE A FIRST DRAFT AND SHOW IT TO THEIR TEACHER AND FRIENDS AND TO YOU ”

The personal statement must be original and not contain material copied from another source. Copying will be identified at UCAS and the universities and colleges informed.



STUDENT FINANCE

Student finance

Parents often wonder how a young person affords to pay tuition fees and repayment of their student loan.

Well, they don't have to – or at least not all at once, and certainly not at the start of their studies. Loans for living and fees are borrowed from the Government and are repaid only when the student has left university and is earning over £21,000 per year. Before that, they don't pay a penny.

Student finance links:

Student Finance England:
www.studentfinance.direct.gov.uk

Student Finance Wales:
www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Student Awards Agency for Scotland:
www.saas.gov.uk

Student Finance NI:
www.studentfinancenl.co.uk

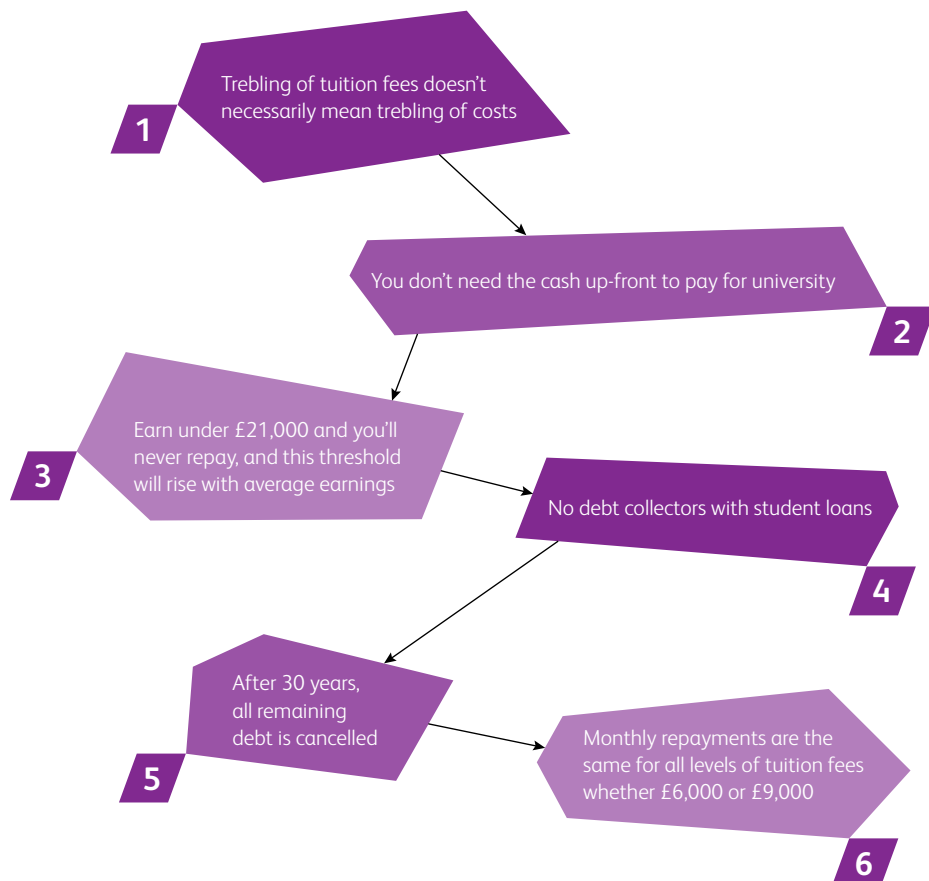
There's more at www.moneysavingexpert.com (click on Students at the very top). This includes calculators and checklists which help applicants get the information that is relevant to them, and lots of advice to help families decide such matters as whether to pay fees upfront.



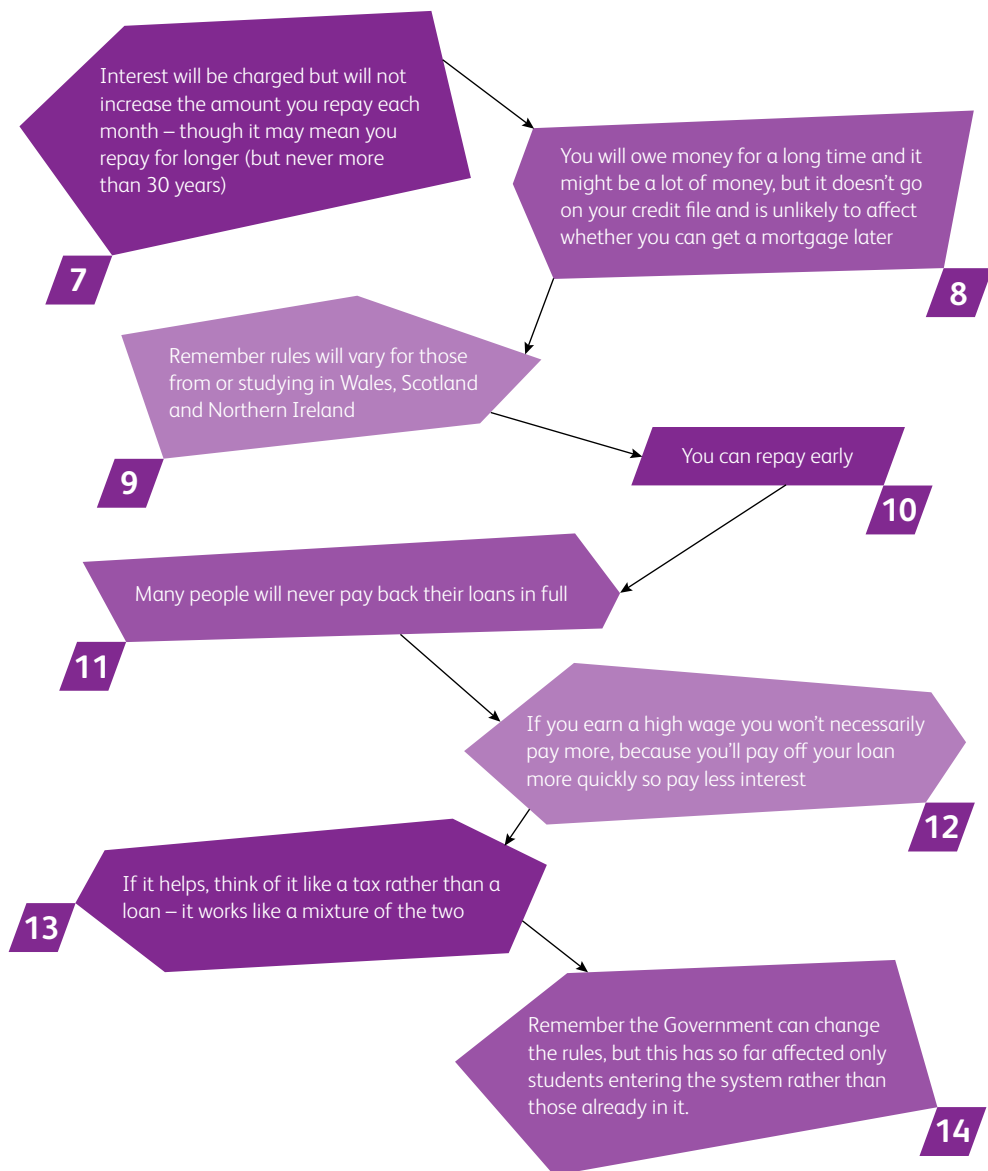
Student finance

Moneysavingexpert.com

has worked with UCAS to explain student finance.
Some of their top financial facts are:



Student finance





**WHAT
HAPPENS
NEXT?**

Key dates

2013

Mid-September Applications can be submitted to UCAS.

15 October Deadline for applications for the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and applications for medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and veterinary science.

2014

15 January Deadline for application to all courses except those listed with a 15 October or 24 March deadline.

25 February Extra opens.

24 March Deadline for applications to art and design courses except those listed with a 15 January deadline.

Applications received after the above deadlines will still be forwarded to universities, providing they have vacancies, but they are not obliged to consider them.

30 June Last date for receipt of applications at UCAS. All applications received later are automatically entered into Clearing.

Early August SQA results are published and Scottish Clearing vacancy information service starts.

14 August GCE A level, Advanced Diploma and PreU results are published and full Clearing information service starts.

20 September Last receipt of applications through Apply.

Make sure you speak to your child's school or college as they may have their own deadlines which will often be earlier than those above.

There will also be specified cut-off dates for replying to offers – details can be found on

www.ucas.com

What happens next?

Some of the worry and energy evaporates after the application is submitted to UCAS. Now starts the waiting game as university admissions tutors read all the applications and make their initial decisions about whether to offer each applicant a place or not.

What we do with applications

Every application is checked at UCAS for completeness and then it is forwarded to the universities, usually within 48 hours. It is then that the universities start deciding whether to offer the applicant a place.

Tutors assess whether an applicant is capable of completing the course and benefiting from study. They make their decisions based on predicted grades for their exams, their personal statement and the school's reference, and sometimes an interview or portfolio. Sometimes they make their offers within a week or two and sometimes they will take a lot longer.

UCAS Track

Every applicant will be able to access Track. This is the online system they use to keep up-to-date with progress and reply to their offers. Full details will be included with the Welcome letter we send when they apply.

Offers

When the universities and colleges have decided, the applicant receives their response on Track. The response might be an unconditional place, a conditional place which depends on their exam results or some other event or circumstance, or an unsuccessful decision which means your son or daughter is not being offered a place.

When your son or daughter has heard from all their choices, they must make their decisions about the offers they have. They can select the one they like best to make a 'firm' reply, and in most cases they can also choose a second offer to accept as their 'insurance' choice. They do not need to reply to their offers until they have received all of them.

To find more details about offers and making replies to offers visit www.ucas.com/students/results/whatnext.

When they have made their choices there will be other matters to arrange such as accommodation and bank accounts. Check the university website for up-to-date information about the options.

Extra and Clearing

If your son or daughter does not receive any offers, or doesn't like the offers they receive, they can still apply to university.

If they are holding no offers for whatever reason and have previously used all five choices, they can reapply through Extra, which runs from 25 February 2014 until early July 2014

In Extra, applicants make one further choice at a time using Track. They check on the UCAS search tool which courses are available in Extra, then make their choice and submit their application again. There is no additional fee to pay. They can apply for courses in any subject but they need to be sure that they are going to be able to meet the entry requirements with their exams, and they need to remember that they cannot change their personal statement. Once an Extra application has been submitted, one of three things will happen.

The university may...

- Make them a conditional or unconditional offer.
- Make them unsuccessful.
- Not respond with.

In which case the applicant can...

- Decide whether or not to accept the offer. In Extra there is no insurance acceptance.
- Apply through another choice through Extra.
- Check with the university in case they are still considering their application, then apply to another choice through Extra without waiting any further.

If for any reason the applicant decides not to use Extra or is unsuccessful in Extra, they may wait until after receipt of their results and then apply through Clearing.

Applicants who want to use Clearing must find their Clearing number on Track and then search in the UCAS search tool for vacancies. If they find a course which suits them and for which they have the entry requirements, they should phone the university. The university will question them and if interested in admitting them will ask for their Clearing number and Personal ID. If the university offers a place, the applicant enters the course in Track and the university will respond.

If your son or daughter does better than expected, they should explore Adjustment. This is a scheme allowing them to apply to another course if they have met and exceeded the conditions of their current conditional firm offer.

Starting uni

Suddenly it is all real and your son or daughter will actually be a university student! They will need to make final arrangements about practicalities like:

Where to live – university accommodation may be reserved for first year students and there will usually be a choice between shared or single rooms, en-suite bathroom or shared facilities, all at different prices. Private houses owned by landlords and purpose-built student accommodation from private providers are also available in most locations.

What to eat – some accommodation is self-catering which is flexible but requires a basic understanding of cooking and nutrition, and some is catered which is less flexible but may be more like home!



THER ARE LOTS OF YOUNG
PEOPLE IN THE SAME
BOAT

Making friends – there are lots of clubs and societies which bring like-minded students together and your son's or daughter's study group will often be a lot larger than at school. They should check out the student union facilities too.

Fresher's week – this is a series of events laid on for new students to welcome them at university and often marks the start of lasting friendships.

Pastoral support – universities have chaplains and counselling services to help new students settle in. There are lots of young people all in the same boat.

Security – don't forget to advise your son or daughter to keep safe. Make them aware that it is more difficult to be sure that everyone knows who is who when there are a lot of new people brought together, so they must take care of themselves and their possessions. Make sure they look at www.nus.org.uk/en/campaigns/the-lock/ for advice on avoiding becoming another student crime statistic.

There are other things to consider which they may not have much experience in organising, such as TV licences, insurance and kitchenware. Your guidance here could be invaluable.

Hints and tips

Our top tips for a smooth journey into university or college:

- Start researching early
- Know the UCAS deadlines (see page 23)
- Register for our parent emails at www.ucas.com/parents/register
- Look at university websites and our search tool on www.ucas.com
- Visit open days and UCAS conventions
- Check entry requirements of the courses they want to apply for
- Write several drafts of the personal statement
- Ensure they understand student finance
- Know their date for replying to their offers
- Understand how Extra and Clearing work (see page 25)
- UCAS is here to help

Some other things to bear in mind:

Uni is not just for people who are good at academic courses - There are thousands of practical, physical or creative courses which develop practical skill and work experience. There's a course structure to suit everyone.

Oxford and Cambridge are not for people like me - Students at Oxbridge come from all sorts of backgrounds. In many ways they are no different to any other university.

You don't have to add five choices - There's space for five choices, but they can apply for just one. Or two, three or four. As long as no offers have been accepted or declined, they can add additional courses later.

You don't have to have an insurance choice - These can act a little like a back-up. However it is important that they only select one if they are happy to attend that university - an insurance choice is not a requirement.

What students say:

"It all seems so horrifying at first but you have to remember that UCAS is there to make things easier for you".

"Your UCAS application is not as scary as your teachers make out... it is really hard to make a mistake as it takes you through step-by-step".

"Keep the personal statement professional. And absolutely no spelling errors. You want to seem well rounded and also focused on your subject."

Glossary

Admissions tests – for some subjects (for example, law, medicine) applicants must take an additional test (see www.ucas.com/students/choosingcourses/admissions/)

Adjustment – if an applicant's results are better than expected, they may be able to change their confirmed choice (see www.ucas.com/students/nextsteps/adjustment/)

Bursary – a grant made to help support a student financially
(see pages 19 and 21 for more about finances)

Clearing – a way of applying to university late in the cycle (see page 25)

Complaints – if things don't go to plan your son or daughter may want to make an official complaint (see www.ucas.com/students/startinguni/complaints)

Conditional offer – an offer which will give your son or daughter a place at university if they fulfil certain conditions, usually exam grades (see www.ucas.com/students/offers/offertypes)

Deferral – your son or daughter may decide to put off going to university for a year. They should check with the university whether they will accept an application to defer.

e-newsletter – sign up for the UCAS parents' e-newsletter now
(see www.ucas.com/parents/register)

Firm choice – your son's or daughter's preferred offer

Insurance choice – your son's or daughter's second choice offer which should have lower conditions than their firm choice

League tables – helpful in understanding the differences between universities (see page 11)

Reference – your son's or daughter's school will supply a reference for their application, or an independent referee can be used. They may get a copy of this by contacting UCAS (see www.ucas.com/students/applying/howtoapply/dataprotectionact)

Tariff – sometimes offers are made in terms of UCAS Tariff points.
(For an explanation of the Tariff see www.ucas.com/students/ucas_tariff/)

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