

UCAS TERMS EXPLAINED

With so many variables in the application process, we've used quite a few terms to explain what we mean.

Some are obvious, but in case they get confusing we've explained them here so you have an easy place to double check them.

Higher education in the UK

A level – The General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A level, or more commonly the A level), is an academic qualification taken in England, Wales and Northern Ireland by students completing further education (secondary or pre-university education).

Accommodation – where you'll live during your time as a student – such as residence halls, off-campus student housing, etc.

Adviser – someone who provides you with information, advice and support with your application. This could be a teacher, tutor, counsellor or agent.

Agent – also known as or consultants or educational advisers, agents are representatives from around the world who represent UK universities and colleges, English language centres or independent boarding schools. They typically have a contractual relationship with one or more course providers who pay them commission for each student placed on their courses.

AS – the common term for the Advanced Subsidiary or first part of a full A level qualification.

Bachelor's degree – a three or four year course you can take in undergraduate higher education after you've finished further education – also known as a 'first degree' or 'undergraduate degree'. Most courses are either a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science.

BA – a common abbreviation for a Bachelor of Arts degree.

CertHE – a Certificate of Higher Education is a higher education qualification offered in the UK, typically taking one year (full-time) or two years (part-time) study to complete.

College – a provider of further and higher education.

Conservatoire – a provider of performance-based music, dance and drama courses.

Course – there are many different courses across different levels, subjects and locations – from foundation degrees to PhDs.

Course provider – a university, college or conservatoire offering higher education courses.

DipHE – a Diploma in Higher Education is a higher education qualification offered in the UK and generally awarded after two years of full-time study at a university or higher education institution.

First class honours – Most UK course providers use a degree classification system. First class honours, or a 'first' is the highest level degree classification awarded.

First year/second year/third year/fourth year/final year – are terms used to refer to students or stages in the UK higher education system.

Fresher – is a slang term for students in their first year of university.

Further education (FE) – this is post-compulsory secondary or pre-university education in the UK. Courses typically focus on vocational or basic skills.

Gap year – a year typically taken after completion of secondary-level qualifications before starting a higher education course. During this year, students often travel, volunteer or complete work experience.

GCSE – is the abbreviated term for the General Certificate of Secondary Education – an academic qualification taken by students aged 14–16 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Graduate – a student who has completed and graduated from an undergraduate course – they can now apply for postgraduate courses.

HEI – universities, colleges and conservatoires are sometimes referred to as higher education institutions.

Higher education (HE) – the level of education UCAS can help you apply to – from undergraduate courses when you've finished further education, to postgraduate courses you can move on to after graduating from an undergraduate degree.

Higher National Certificate (HNC) – a vocationally-focused higher education qualification offered in the UK, usually taking one year to complete, and roughly equivalent to one year of university study.

Higher National Diploma (HND) – a vocationally-focused higher education qualification offered in the UK. Completion of an HND is considered equivalent to the second year of a three year degree course and can often be used to gain entry to a university course.

Honours – for example an 'honours degree'. Most first degrees in higher education can come with 'honours'. It's not a grade as such – it just means it's possible to get your degree 'with honours', which would be an extra indication of quality. Check what you need to do to get honours – it might be getting a certain grade or submitting a good dissertation.

Institution – a term sometimes used to refer to a university or college.

League tables – rankings of course providers – these can be an overall ranking, or listed by reputation, courses or departments.

Lecturer – is the name of an academic based at a university or college who teaches, lectures and conducts research.

MA – the abbreviation for Master of Arts, which can mean two different things. Often it stands for Master of Arts, a postgraduate level qualification. But it can also be an undergraduate degree studied at one of the UK's ancient universities such as the universities of St. Andrews, Oxford and Cambridge.

Mark – also known as 'grade' or 'result' can be used to refer to the outcome of an individual paper, exam, module or overall class or course.

Module – typically one part of an overall class, course or subject, but can sometimes be taken as a standalone qualification.

Ordinary degree – generally is a degree passed without honours. Some universities offer ordinary degree courses in their own right. Ordinary degrees can also be awarded to those students who do complete an honours degree course but without achieving the conditions required to gain 'honours'.

Postgraduate – higher education study for graduates who have already completed an undergraduate course.

Postgraduate research (PGR) – a research-intensive higher education course for graduates who have already completed an undergraduate course.

Postgraduate taught (PGT) – a higher education course for graduates who have already completed an undergraduate course – often including a variety of coursework, lectures and seminars etc, as well as a supervised dissertation, project or thesis.

Predicted grades – the grades a teacher, tutor or other adviser qualified to remark on a student's academic suitability believes they will achieve when they complete their secondary qualification.

Private school – (or an independent or public school) typically charging tuition fees for students to attend and are outside of federal or local government control.

Public school – is a term generally used in the UK to refer to the top independent schools in the UK. Typically, these are older, more expensive and exclusive than other independent schools.

Sandwich course – the year of a course where you work in a profession you're studying about.

Second class honours – Most UK universities and colleges use a degree classification system. The highest level is commonly called a 'first' with second class honours broken down into two further classifications – upper division (or 2:1) and lower division (2:2). A 2:1 or upper second class honours classification is often required for entry into many postgraduate courses in the UK.

Third class honours – Most UK universities and colleges use a degree classification system. Third class honours is typically the lowest degree classification awarded by UK universities and colleges.

Transcript – an official or unofficial academic record produced by a school, college, university or awarding body.

Unistats – a handy website for students to research and compare subjects, universities and colleges – from student satisfaction ratings to statistics on getting a graduate job after you finish the course.

University – a provider of higher education.

UCAS applications

Adjustment – one of the services you can use to look for an alternative course. You can only use this if you've met and exceeded your conditions of your conditional offer. You can look for another course while still holding your original confirmed place.

Apply – this is the name of our online application system.

Changed course offer – you might get one of these if you haven't met the conditions of the offers you accepted. It might involve a different start date or point of entry, or a different course altogether.

Choice – a choice is a course you apply for on your application – many students make multiple choices to increase their chances of getting a place on one of them.

Clearing – one of the services you can use to look for alternative courses. If you didn't get a place on a course – because you didn't receive any offers, declined your offers, didn't get the grades you needed or applied after 30 June – Clearing allows you to apply for courses that still have vacancies.

Conditional offer – an offer of a place on a course, but to be accepted on the course you'll need to meet the conditions – usually related to your exam results. This is a common type of offer for students applying direct from school or college.

Confirmation – the outcome of a conditional offer you've accepted being confirmed. If you meet the conditions your place will be made unconditional (meaning you've got a place on the course) – if not the offer will not be confirmed.

CUKAS – Conservatoires UK Admissions Service – the performing arts application service.

Deferral – this is what you do if you'd like to carry an offer over to the following year.

Entry profiles – these are within course listings in the UCAS search tool – they're put together by university and college staff, with information including entry requirements and course content.

Extra – one of the services you can use to apply for alternative places if your first five choices don't work out.

Firm choice – an offer you accept as your first choice.

GTTR – The Graduate Teacher Training Registry – the original name for the teacher training application service, now being integrated into ucas.com.

Insurance choice – an offer you accept as your second choice – just in case you don't meet the entry requirements to get your firm offer.

Invitation – in your application, this is another entry requirement you might get – an invitation from a university or college asking you to attend an interview or audition, or to provide a portfolio, essay or another piece of work.

Personal ID – in your application, the 10-digit number you get when you register to Apply. You'll need it when you log into Track and you'll be asked for this if you get in touch with our Customer Contact Centre or one of the universities that you apply to.

Personal statement – a piece of text applicants write to show why they're applying and why they'd be a great student for a course provider to accept.

Point of entry – in your application, which year of the course you start at – for example '2' means you'd start in the second year of the course.

Referee – in your application, someone who provides a reference for you.

Reference – in your application, a written recommendation in an applicant's application from a teacher, adviser or professional.

Scheme code – in your application, this is used along with your Personal ID to identify your application.

Tariff – the UCAS Tariff is the system for allocating points to the different qualifications you can use to get into undergraduate higher education.

Track – in your application, the name of our online tracking system where you can see how your application is progressing. Here you can reply to offers and make changes such as changing your email address etc. (For postgraduate courses Apply is combined with Track.)

UCAS – the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service in the UK. This includes our main UCAS undergraduate application, as well as the other UCAS applications which we have integrated into **ucas.com**: CUKAS (performing arts), GTTR (teacher training) and UKPASS (postgraduate). We also help students from 13 years old upwards with UCAS Progress.

UKPASS – the UK Postgraduate Application and Statistical Service – the original name for the postgraduate application service, now integrated into **ucas.com**.

Unconditional offer – in your application, an offer of a place on a course with no conditions – the place is yours if you want it.

Unsuccessful – in your application, this is when either you haven't been made an offer or you haven't met the conditions of a conditional offer.

Withdrawal – in your application, before the decision has been made to make you an offer or not, either you or the university or college can cancel a choice.