

Parents' Guide to the UCAS Process

UCAS stands for **Universities and Colleges Admissions Service**. It is a centralised provider that candidates use to apply to university. Everyone who wants to study an undergraduate degree in the UK will have to apply through UCAS.

Your son/daughter will soon be applying to university, if they consider this as the next path in their chosen career.

This is an overview designed to support your understanding of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service and their necessary criteria's for a successful application.

What type of university to choose?

Some universities are known for vocational education and have associations with employers, other universities – such as the 'Russel Group' are acknowledged for their academic research and teaching methods.

Tip: do not apply to a university based on academic reputation only. Make sure visit an open day, lectures and seminars – consider is the learning style and environment for you?

Ultimately you will need to match your predicted grades, the course content combined with university lifestyle to the relevant universities and what they offer.

Factors to Consider in Choosing Courses

Choice of Subject

- Is there a specific career path you desire to follow?
- Link your transferable skills, knowledge and experience as well as your academy subject you are currently studying.
- Does it link to your extra-circular activities or other interests?
- Will you enjoy studying this course and the environment as it can be a 3 year course and upwards?

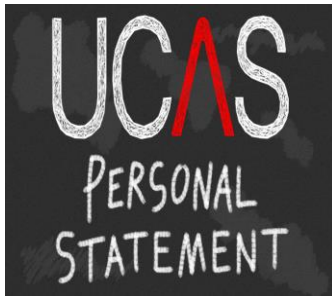
Choice of Course- There is a huge variety of courses and universities to select from so you will need to:

- You must research the course content. There is a wide range of courses within extensive subject area- make sure the course content is of an interest to you.
- **Tip:** it's vital not to scan through the course content when comparing courses – similar courses can essentially cover quite different topic areas. Look closely through the material content on the university website, including the core subjects and optional modules.
- The methods of teaching and learning – Lectures, Seminars, Small group discussions and what is the actual contact time with the lecturers vs independent research.
- What is your the preferred type of assessment? – Examination, coursework or both. Is the course based on essay-writing, practical work or problem-based learning?
Tip: think about your ideal learning style when choosing a course. Do you prefer more hands-on, practical learning to independent essay-writing?
- Are you interested in completing a placement year or studying abroad as part of your course?
- Look at entry requirements as they differ hugely from university to university. Grade requirements are printed in prospectus and on the university website; remember to check these prior to completing application.
- Location – the distance from home, cost of travel must all be considered carefully
- Whether you prefer to live in the City/Town/Rural life
- Is the university on a campus or on multiple-sites?
- Accommodation and cost of living or do you prefer to commute from home to keep costs down
- The quality of other facilities: such as libraries. The quality of the academic facilities are a key consideration for applicants going from classroom-based learning to more independent study; naturally you would expect access to exceptional learning resources to support your educational needs.

Tip: We advise students attend open days to get an impression of the university and furthermore can visualise yourself going there. When you are on an open day, make sure you view the academic facilities you will be regularly using, including the library, computer suites or labs. If you cannot make it to the university itself, gather as much material as you can – maybe even a virtual tour from the university website.

Researching University and Courses

- **UCAS website:** www.ucas.com ; use the UCAS search tool
- <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk>
- University websites
- Prospectuses
- Visits and open-days
- Virtual tours of the university



All students are required to write a Personal Statement

We recommend writing a draft over the summer holiday and checking you have the relevant work experience that is required to going to the University of your Choice.

What makes a good personal statement?

The aim of a personal statement is to persuade universities and colleges to accept you on their course.

- **Remember** the same statement is used at all universities, so **do not** name individual universities.
- It is wise to choose similar subjects so your statement is relevant to all universities.

First question that needs to be answered is:

Why are you applying?

- Why do you want to study higher education?
- Why are you interested in that particular subject?
- What is your aim after studying that course?

Second question that needs to be answered is:

What makes you suitable?

- Your skills.
- Your knowledge.
- Your achievements and experiences that will help you.
- All of the above need to be proved using your education, employment, work experience, hobbies, interest and social activities.
- You need to think which of your skills and experiences are most relevant?
- Check the course you are interested in to see what level of understanding you need, qualifications or skills. This way you can link up your experiences and relevant skills to the qualities of the course.

The strongest applicants are the ones who are able to link their extra curriculum activities with the course they have decided to study.

How to write your statement?

There is no correct way of writing your statement. Remember you can draft and redraft as many times as you want. Get lots of different people to view it. Take on constructive criticism as way of improving you statement.

Structure

- See what qualities and attributes the university or college value the most.

- Then, order your information and experiences with these qualities in mind, so that are most relevant comes first.

Style

- Keep your statement enthusiastic, concise and what come naturally.
- Keep it professional avoid humour or quotes, because they are personal to individual and not everyone has the same sense of humour.
- Make sure Grammar, spellings and punctuation are correct.
- It is not recommended to use **bold** underline and *italic*.

Format

- Use 4.000 characters or 47 lines (including spaces and blank lines.)
- Don't copy a personal statement of the internet. It will be checked.

UCAS PROCESS

June/July –Year 12

Student registers to apply online at www.ucas.com: Apply or track your application (you will need a school buzzword – which we will be provided to all the students by Westfield Academy.

By September

- Students should have five realistic choices or at least a good understanding of the courses and universities they prefer to consider.
- The courses should be comparable or related courses (as there is only one personal statement) with a range of entry grade requirements.
- Students should be happy to go to any of the universities they have chosen; it is a possibility you may not to a receive offers from all your chosen university courses.
- Y13 students receive their predicted grades. It is important that your son/daughter is realistic about her choices.
- We recommend once you have received your predicted grades which are largely based on the end of year 12 internal examinations- you chose one optimistic universities slightly above your predicted grade boundaries, three on your predicted grades and one below. This way you have a fair selection of choice.
- Some applicants may only make a maximum of four applications for example: Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine courses, therefore you need to choose one alternative course as well.

October – December -Year 13

- Student completes the different sections of the form online and makes payment.
- The fee of **£24** is paid on line by credit or debit card (either applicants or parents are permitted to do this).
- Westfield School will then add the academic reference and submits application to UCAS; these references are provided by your subject teacher and form teacher.

UCAS processes application and makes it available electronically to applicant's chosen **HEIs (Higher Education Institutions)**.

Post UCAS application

- UCAS Track – enables students to see what is happening with their application;
- An admission tutor can make one of three decisions after reviewing applications:
 - Unconditional offer;
 - Conditional offer;
 - Unsuccessful.

UCAS

Track is the online system; applicants use to keep up-to-date with the progress of their application and reply to their offers. Full details will be explained in the welcome email your son/daughter receives from UCAS once their form has been completed and submitted.

October – March

- HEIs consider and make decisions- the information will be relayed to you via Track.

February/March

- **Student Finance** opens and you may start to apply.
- UCAS will inform you of this when this happens.



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Guides to Student Finance

<https://university.which.co.uk/advice/student-finance/quick-guide-to-fees-and-finance-if-youre-studying-in-england>



<https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltime-students>

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/finance-and-support/undergraduate-tuition-fees-and-student-loans>

What will happen next?

- Interview/Offer- which consist of: **conditional, unconditional** (A university will offer you a place regardless of your A level or BTEC results- this is usually based on a good personal statement) and **unsuccessful**.
- All decisions will be made via UCAS track.
- Every institution works differently and may vary in the time it may take to get back to you.

Types of Conditional Offer

- Grade offer e.g. AAB or BBC in any subject or ABB (A in specific subject)
- Other Universities will give tariff points as well Grade offers
- Whilst other universities will only give tariff points.

A level

Grade	Tariff points
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

AS

Grade	Tariff points
A	20
B	16
C	12
D	10
E	

Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Diploma Grade Tariff points

D*D*	112
D*D	104
DD	96
DM	80
MM	64
MP	48
PP	32

Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate Grade Tariff points

D*	56
D	48
M	32
P	24

Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Certificate Grade Tariff points

D*	28
D	24
M	16
P	8

All Decisions are made via TRACK

Applicants view all outcomes and manage application via Track (including updating personal information, replying to offers and using Extra.)



- Candidates who are unsuccessful in all 5 choices will become eligible for **UCAS Extra**
- UCAS will contact these applicants.
- Extra identifies unfilled vacancies and eligible applicants can choose to apply for **one** of these courses on Track.

By May for Most

- Applicants will need to decide on a **firm offer** – which is their first preferred choice. And an **insurance offer** which is a second choice from the offers they have attained.
- Next you inform UCAS via Track of your decision i.e. your firm and insured choice of universities.
- Student Finance should also be completed by this time as well.

On Results Day- August

- Students - **MUST BE AT HOME** – HEIs deal with **applicants** – **not the parents**.
- HEIs record final results and decisions which applicants can view on Track

What to Do When A- Level/BTEC Results Are Published

- When you receive your results, it will be your responsibility to know what you are required to do next.
- You will be accountable for your own decisions independently of the school.

So gather information beforehand be prepared and ready

You will need:

- The firm and insurance choice university's telephone number.
- Alternative universities that you will consider- The Telegraph or UCAS will publish a list of universities, courses that are still available and their course code.
- Make a list of the telephone numbers of the universities and the courses you will consider - if things do not go to plan.
- You will need your UCAS personal ID
- Clearing Number – which you will receive on results day via UCAS Track- if you do not get a place at your firm or insurance choice.

UCAS Track – will be available by 9.00am on Results day

- Use 'Track' on the UCAS website on results day and it will state online whether or not you have been accepted at your 'firm offer' university.
- Note well, it will **not** give you the examination results.
- With a confirmed offer at your firm choice university, please do not assume that you have attained the grades of the firm offer – they may take you with slightly lower grade boundaries.

Grades Attained and Options for Moving Forward

If you have achieved the grades for your firm offer

- All confirmed results and Confirmation letters are made known to you in Track.
- You will receive an email specifying there has been an update in Track.
- You must log into Track to read the letter as you may be required to take action, depending on what the letter states.

If you have not attained the grades for your firm offer

- View Track to see whether they will still take you.
- If there are no updates, you should check your emails or ring the university to establish if they will take you- be patient you maybe in a queue.
- Have in front of you your UCAS Personal ID, course applied for, course code, details of the conditional offer and your - A level/BTEC results.
- Ask to be put through to the relevant subject department.
- Do not expect instant results. Some university departments might give you an immediate decision, while others may request you to ring back at a later date.
- It is possible that you will have to ring back several times over a few day periods before you receive a decision. As sometimes university departments do not always commit themselves until they have a clear overview. They may have to wait for applicants who have met the terms of their conditional offers to confirm that they are taking up their places (some may choose to withdraw or defer).

If you have already been rejected

- You will be informed of this via Track
- This decision cannot be altered.

If you are unsuccessful in attaining the grades for your firm offer and your application is rejected– however you attained the grades for your insurance offer

- Your insurance university will accept you.
- There is no need to contact the university.
- You will receive a confirmation letter to confirm your place via Track. The letter will advise you on and if any additional action required.

If you are unsuccessful in attaining the grade requirements for your firm offer and they reject your application – and you have missed the grades for your insurance offer

- Ring this university directly, to see if they will accept you with your lower grades.
- Have in front of you your UCAS Personal ID, course applied for, course code, details of the conditional offer and your - A level/BTEC results.
- Ask to be put through to the relevant subject department.
- If this is not the case and they do not make you an offer, you then will have to go through **Clearing**.

If you are unsuccessful in attaining the grades at both your firm and insurance university

- The insurance university may offer you a place on a different course.
- This will be specified on Track by the symbol UCC.
- **You do not have to accept this course**
- You will receive a Confirmation Change letter via Track, outlining the alternative choices available to you.
- You will have only five calendar days to reply to a changed course offer.

If you are unsuccessful with both firm and insurance offer and are not offered a place on a different course that you want, then you are eligible for clearing

- **Clearing** will be activated electronically through Track.
- When you become eligible for Clearing, an 'Add Clearing Choice' button will appear on your Track 'choices' screen.
- You will need to act swiftly.
- View the lists of courses and universities on the UCAS website or in The Telegraph and phone the university directly.
- You can contact different universities and be informally offered several places.
- However, you will need to decide which offer to accept as you can only enter **one choice** in Track.
- **You will need your Personal ID and Clearing Number (shown in Track)**
- More Information about Clearing is available at www.ucas.com/clearing

UCAS

Clearing

How to use Clearing

- Contact the universities directly by telephone, which have the courses that you will consider as an option and discuss whether they will offer you a place.
- You may inquire about several places and courses however you can only enter **one** place on Track.
- If a university provisionally offers you a place in Clearing, they will give you a date by which you must enter the course details on Track.
- If you want to be considered for the place, you need to click on your 'Add Clearing choice' button and enter the institution and course details.
- UCAS will let the university know that you have entered their details on Track.
- If the university accepts you, the details will be displayed in the 'choices' section of Track and UCAS will send you a letter to let you know your place is confirmed.
- If the University declines you, the 'Add clearing choice' button will be re-activated, so you can apply to another choice in Clearing.

Universities will formalise agreements to admit you when they have:

- They know your Personal ID and Clearing Number (shown in Track)
- You have entered the institution and course details in Track.



Adjustment

- If the A level grades you have achieved are **higher than** your firm offer, then you may take part in the adjustment.
- This permits you to search for a university course, which requires higher grades than your conditional firm offer, whilst your original place is held for you.
- There are no Adjustment availability lists, so you contact a university directly to discuss an Adjustment place options and availability.
- Note well you should not expect places to be vacant on popular, oversubscribed courses at top ranking universities.
- You will need to register on Track to take part in this adjustment period.
- The period lasts for five days from when the university confirms your original place and it becomes 'UF' – Unconditional Firm.
- If you become eligible to use Adjustment you have 5 days to find an alternative course.

In conclusion

- It is important that you understand all the options available to enable you to move forward depending on your results, and what is the next option available for you at each stage.
- Do not panic and stay calm.
- An organised and ordered approach is vital.
- Good Luck!