

Choosing a Uni

Important: UCAS deadlines and processes can change slightly each year. Students should always check the official UCAS website for the exact dates and current guidance: <https://www.ucas.com>

There are thousands of different courses on offer at Higher Education colleges across the UK. With so many options, it's important you do your research before making your selection.

Things to consider

- Even though they may share the same course name, no two courses are identical and they may vary hugely in course content, so study the different modules for each course you are considering.
- Some courses incorporate time studying abroad or industry placements – these can be for a term or a full year (known as a 'sandwich' year)
- Read about courses on a variety of different websites; check out the [university rankings](#) and students' views on the forums of [Student Room](#) website as well as the course descriptions on the university's own websites.
- Look at the university building and accommodation; is it on a campus or in the centre of a big city? Look at the student accommodation, library and sports facilities
- Look at details of the Students' Union and which societies and clubs are on offer

A maximum of 5 choices are available. Most students pick the same or similar course at 5 different universities. Students applying for Medicine/Veterinary related courses can only apply to four with the fifth choice being another subject.

Each university can view your application at the same time. Choices are not listed in preference. Applications are BLIND one university cannot see where else you have applied.

Decisions

Most replies from universities and colleges are likely to have been received by the end of March, though officially the latest date when you can expect a final decision is early May.

Those without offers from their original choices may use **UCAS Extra**. This is active from mid-March to the end of June. Course vacancies will be published on the UCAS website and UCAS will tell you if you are eligible for this scheme.

How to Respond:

- You may hold no more than one **Firm** acceptance.
- You may also hold one **Insurance** acceptance - this should be lower grades.
- All other offers must be declined.

Clearing opens in early summer, with most activity taking place on Results Day (check UCAS website for exact timing this year). Sixth Form and Careers staff will be prepared for discussion with those students who have not achieved required grades for Conditional Firm or Conditional Insurance offers on the morning of Results Day.

Self-release into Clearing: Instead of applicants contacting their chosen university or college and waiting to be released into Clearing, they can now do this themselves – saving valuable time. It will be available to all placed applicants in Hub.

UCAS Extra is another chance for students to gain a place at university or college, UCAS Extra runs from late winter (check UCAS website for exact timing this year) and early summer (check UCAS website for exact timing this year). If you used all five of your choices on your original application and you're not holding an offer, you'll be able to add another choice using Extra.

UCAS Application Process

SEPTEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Have final choices of universities and/or colleges ready. ✓ Finalise your Personal Statement. ✓ Have Academic Mentoring session with Tutor ✓ Register for: LNAT; BMAT; UKCAT if applicable.
OCTOBER	<p>Oxford and Cambridge UCAS deadline – mid October (check UCAS website for exact date this year) .</p> <p>Medicine/Vet Sci./Dentistry UCAS deadline – mid October (check UCAS website for exact date this year).</p> <p>Internal deadline for UCAS forms: TBC each year but usually early November</p> <p>Music application for conservatoires deadline – early October (check UCAS website for exact date this year).</p>
NOVEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Oxbridge applicants submit written work if required. ✓ Specialist subject tests. e.g. BMAT, Oxbridge tests. ✓ Preparation for university interviews. ✓ JCoSS Internal UCAS deadline
DECEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interviews at Oxford and Cambridge.
JANUARY	<p>Official UCAS deadline – late January equal consideration deadline (check UCAS website for exact date this year).</p>
FEBRUARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consider UCAS offers for Firm and Insurance.
MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Complete Finance application. ✓ UCAS Extra available for those without offers.
APRIL	<p>Final Firm/Insurance/Decline decisions to UCAS.</p>
MAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Final examination preparation.
JUNE	<p>GCE A2 Examinations.</p>
AUGUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A level and Cambridge Technicals results. UCAS Clearing.

UCAS Tariff: A levels and EPQ

	A Levels	Extended Project (EPQ)
A*	56	28
A	48	24
B	40	20
C	32	16
D	24	12
E	16	8

UCAS Tariff: Cambridge Technical Courses

Level 3 Extended Certificate		Level 3 Diploma	
D*	56	D*D*	112
D	48	D*D	104
M	32	DD	96
P	16	DM	80
		MM	64
		MP	48
		PP	32
(D) Distinction; (M) Merit; (P) Pass			

Other qualifications such as music at grades 6 and above also carry Tariff points. Not all universities use UCAS tariff points – many make grade-based offers.

For more details go to: www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/explore-your-options/entry-requirements/tariff-tables#alevels

Instructions for registering with UCAS

- ✓ Go to www.ucas.com
- ✓ Click on **Apply**
- ✓ Click on Register/log in to use Apply
- ✓ Click on the red box which says **Register**
- ✓ Read the information
- ✓ Click on **Next**
- ✓ Read through the terms and conditions
- ✓ Tick the box which states that you accept the terms and conditions
- ✓ Click on **Next**
- ✓ Enter your title, gender, names and date of birth
- ✓ Click on **Next**
- ✓ Click on the option for **I have neither of the above**
- ✓ Click on **Next**
- ✓ Click on **UK**
- ✓ Click on **Next**
- ✓ Enter your house number and postcode
- ✓ Check the address generated is correct
- ✓ Click on **Next**
- ✓ Enter your home telephone number, mobile number and email address.
 - Tick the mailings option which you prefer. We recommend that you only tick the middle option.
- ✓ Click on **Next**
- ✓ Create your password.

Write down the password which you create – you will not be shown it again and you MUST enter your password EVERY TIME you log on to your UCAS application form. We do NOT have a central record of these passwords although you can let your form tutor have a copy of it just in case!
- ✓ Choose and answer the **four security questions**
- ✓ Click on **Next**
- ✓ Write down the username you are given at this stage – you will not be shown it again and you MUST enter it EVERY TIME you log on to your UCAS application form. We do NOT have a central record of these passwords although you can let your form tutor have a copy of it just in case!
- ✓ Click on **login now**
- ✓ Click on the option **through my school / college**
- ✓ Enter

Completing the Application Form – **IMPORTANT: Read This First!**

Section 1: Personal details

Preferred first name: do not enter your nickname unless this is the *only* name people call you e.g. Josh. Just leave blank

Previous surname: leave blank unless your name has changed

Home address: leave blank unless different from postal address

Email Address: – include a professional sounding email address that will give admission tutors a good impression. If lazybones@gmail.com is your email, open up a new account! Do NOT use your school email address.

Unique Learner number: leave blank

Student support fee code: select 02 UK **not** 01 private finance or you will be paying the entire cost of your tuition fees up front.

Student support arrangements: enter the name of the borough that you live in e.g. Barnet or Essex - this **must** match the borough in your postal address.

Criminal convictions: – leave blank unless you have any criminal convictions. Students have incorrectly selected this in the past – beware!

Nominated access: this is an opportunity to nominate someone else to discuss your application with UCAS in case you are not available, e.g. if you are abroad on a Gap Year. Students normally nominate one of their parents. It is advisable to complete this section – just in case! Depending on your circumstances, you could select a teacher instead with their permission.

Disability/special needs: make sure that if you have any disability, longstanding illness or SEN that you declare these on your application. There are many benefits open to students with disability or additional needs and universities will not discriminate against you. In the box provided you should write information about access arrangement or equipment you use so that universities can put this support in place for you. What you write here could help you to gain additional funding from Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

More information about DSA can be found on the UCAS or Student Finance website.

Section 2: Additional information

Activities in preparation for higher education 2: this is where you can enter any virtual university taster days or courses you have visited online.

Have you been in care?: You cannot leave this blank – please select YES/NO

Parental education: enter YES if either of your parents has completed a university course. There may be additional funding open to students who are the first generation in their family to go to university.

Section 3: Student Finance

I will be applying for student finance: we would expect all students to select YES so that they can have the option of accessing student loans. Once selected, you have to agree to share information with them so that they can pay out your loan.

Section 4: Choices

Check: have you applied to the right course at the right university? University of Nottingham is different to Nottingham Trent.

Course codes: check very carefully on the UCAS website that you have the correct course code.

Campus Codes: students often miss out information on campus codes where they are required, e.g. if applying to universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and Cardiff. Most universities do not have campus codes but check carefully on the UCAS website to ensure that this is the case for the universities to which you are applying. Note that the University of Exeter has campuses in Exeter and Cornwall which are 2 hours apart.

Start Date: If you intend to apply for deferred entry (i.e. to start the course in September , rather than September) make sure you remember to include this information against each of your choices.

Live at Home: you should indicate “yes” if you intend to live at home and attend the course. Indicate “no” if you will live away from home to attend the course.

Point of Entry: in the vast majority of cases this will be left blank as you are starting the course at the beginning. The only exception is if you are applying to a foundation year, in which case you enter 0.

Section 5: Education

Secondary Schools attended: you need to know the examination centre code for all secondary schools at which you have completed public exams.

JCoSS's code 12283. If you sat your GCSEs at another school, the UCAS application form has a search mechanism for finding your previous school and examination centre code – but not all schools are included. If your previous school is not included, you MUST find out its examination centre number yourself.

GCSE Grades: you must include ALL your GCSE grades. (N.B. English Speaking and Listening is NOT a GCSE grade). For most of you this date is mid August (around Results Day – check UCAS website for exact timing this year) . Students often make errors when entering science GCSE qualifications, i.e., Double Science students take Science and Additional Science. Triple Science students take Science, Additional Science and Further Additional Science. Check your GCSE certificates/check the document that we provide for you.

6th form qualifications: – you must add all qualifications that you are taking and then select the 'pending' tab under the result.

Cambridge Technical students: you need to enter all of the modules that you are taking and ensure that you enter the right level i.e. Diploma or Extended Certificate

Re-takes: If you are re-sitting a qualification, such as Maths GCSE, enter it once with your original grade then again with the new academic year date and leave as 'pending'.

Section 6: Employment

Do not add work experience here – that goes into your personal statement. Only add paid work such as weekend, evening or holiday work.

Section 7: Statement

See Pages 16-19 for help writing your personal statement

Section 8: Reference

A referee will be assigned to you. They have the same amount of space as you do to make you shine. References will not be written until you have completed your personal statement and all other sections of your UCAS form.

If you miss the internal deadlines set for completion, the completion of your reference will be set back.

You do not get a copy of your reference but have the option to see it before it gets sent off.

Your reference includes you predicted grades. If you have not entered your qualifications correctly, predicted grades will not show up on your reference which will delay it being sent off.

Section 9: Pay and send

When all sections are completed, you will only be able to pay once you have ensured that you have clicked the selection completed box at the bottom of every section. You will need to pay online by card.

This **does not** send your application to UCAS but just to us. We can return it to you to make changes if required.

Personal Statement - The Facts

- * The UCAS personal statement has now changed to three structured questions. Students must explain: (1) why they want to study this course, (2) how their qualifications and studies have prepared them, and (3) what experiences outside the classroom have helped prepare them and why these are relevant. Students should always check the UCAS website for the latest guidance.
- * You *cannot* use **bold**, *italics* or underline.
- * Spelling and grammar are IMPORTANT as is layout and structure.
- * You CAN leave a space between paragraphs to make it easier to read.
- * The personal statement is meant to be that, personal. Do not use someone else's words. UCAS runs a programme to check for plagiarism.
- * Work on your draft in **Word** as the UCAS website times you out after about 30 mins and if you haven't saved it.....
- * Make sure you have sold yourself rather than listing experience "volunteering at the stables helped me understand that"

The Personal Statement is the only part of the form over which you have total control. It is your opportunity to provide a more complete, rounded picture of you than just the exam grades and predictions. The personal statement complements the reference written by the school.

It is written by you, about you.

Content

- ✓ Remember that the universities are looking for students. It is the **academic contribution** that you will make which is the most important.
- ✓ Include **reasons for choosing the course**. Research carefully the components that make up the course of your choice. Ensure that you can demonstrate competence in each of these areas:
e.g. intellectual curiosity, enthusiasm, commitment, high academic standards, practical skills, problem solving, creativity, oral communication, foreign language ability (if appropriate).
- ✓ Include **evidence of wider reading** and research beyond your examination work.
- ✓ Read the UCAS Entry Profile. Use this to **evidence your interests, skills and motivation** for the course (It has:- desirable skills and qualities at entry, and skills developed through the course.)
- ✓ Include particular **areas of interest and expertise**.
- ✓ Include relevant **work experience** and apply it to your course.
- ✓ Include some of the **extra-curricular and community activities** that you are involved with. Be selective. Write about them in the context of the skills and qualities that the university is looking for:
e.g. teamwork, team leadership, entrepreneurial ability, responsibility, commitment, perseverance, social conscience, ability to see a project through from idea to completion
- ✓ Include **something that is particular to you** that will make your Personal Statement stand out.
- ✓ Include **gap year plans** if appropriate.
- ✓ Include **references to Key Skills**. The main ones are; communication, numeracy and ICT.

Style

- ✓ Avoid waffle. The space is small so make every sentence 'earn its space'.
- ✓ Write in your style. The universities expect each statement to be written by a 17 year old.
- ✓ You will need to write several drafts. Avoid asking lots of different people to read through it and change it.

For more tips on getting started, what you can do to improve your personal statement and examples of personal statements for different subjects, please get in touch with Miss Burman the Head of UCAS and Destinations.

APPLYING FOR MUSIC AND OTHER PERFORMING ARTS COURSES

It's important to note that the deadline for applying to music at conservatoires, the institutions which specialise in performing arts, is 1 October, i.e. much earlier than the main UCAS application deadline in late January (check UCAS website for exact date this year). Also, whilst most conservatoire courses can now be applied for via the UCAS Conservatoires Scheme, not all conservatoires are part of the scheme. If you want to apply to a conservatoire which is not part of the scheme, do so directly on the conservatoire's website or via the UCAS Undergraduate scheme.

The conservatoires in the UCAS Conservatoires scheme are:

- [Royal Birmingham Conservatoire](#)
- [Bristol Old Vic Theatre School](#)
- [Leeds College of Music](#)
- [Royal Academy of Music](#)
- [Royal College of Music](#)
- [Royal Conservatoire of Scotland](#)
- [Royal Northern College of Music](#)
- [Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama](#)
- [Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance](#)

If you apply via this scheme you create a single electronic application that will be submitted simultaneously to a maximum of six conservatoires.

Students can also make a separate application through UCAS to other universities and colleges offering music, dance and drama courses, although they can only accept a place through one system (i.e. via either UCAS Conservatoires or UCAS).

As part of their application to performing arts courses, students will usually need to pass an audition and these take place at the individual institutions.

You can make an online application from mid-July (check UCAS website for the exact opening date this year) for admission in September of the following year.

Music applications – apply by early October for equal consideration (check UCAS website for the exact deadline this year).

Undergraduate dance, drama and screen production courses – apply by late January for equal consideration (check UCAS website for the exact deadline this year).

Each conservatoire has its own strengths and specialisms, so it is important to research all of them to find the right fit. For example, although all conservatoires offer music courses, only some offer drama courses, and some offer subjects such as film and production. Research graduate destinations to see whether they align with your aspirations.

Other useful links: <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/universities/applying-to-university-and-ucas-deadlines/performing-arts-applications-via-ucas-conservatoires>
<https://www.ucas.com/conservatoires/conservatoire-study-right-me>