

UCAS
APPLICATION
PROCEDURE
e-GUIDE

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GUIDE TO THE UCAS POINTS & APPLICATION PROCESS

What is UCAS?

UCAS is the Universities and Colleges Admission Service. It is the central organisation that processes applications for full-time undergraduate courses at UK universities and colleges.

UCAS covers not only the courses offered by the 100-odd UK universities, but also the courses of another 200 or so UK colleges and other institutions. From this year (2010) application must be made online; there is no paper application form. The fee for applying through UCAS for 2011 entry is £21, the cost for only one course is £11.

How do I apply?

Starting this year (2010) application to UK higher education must be made using the online application system, called Apply. It is a fully secure, password protected system that can be accessed through the UCAS website, (www.ucas.ac.uk). Apply is simple to use. There are dropdown menus and on screen help is available throughout the application process. The UCAS website has detailed guidance on how to apply and it pays to follow this closely. In order to use Apply, you have to register online and it costs nothing. One major advantage of Apply is that, once you have completed the form and submitted it to UCAS, you can track the progress of your application online at any time.

Apply has an online database of over 50,000 courses offered by UK higher education. This is equivalent to over 95% of all the full-time courses available. For over 85% of these courses there is also further information on the courses, entry requirements, careers and other details. All of this information is very helpful when you are selecting the courses you want to apply for, In addition the UCAS website offers the Stamford Test. This is a free service that helps you if you are not sure what subject to study.

In the majority of cases the information you provide in Apply is all the information that a university has in deciding whether or not to make an offer. It pays therefore to ensure that not only the information is correct, but also that it is clearly presented in English that is easily understandable.

The three most important types of information you supply are data about examinations, the courses applied for and the Personal Statement.

Examination results

Information is required about examinations taken to date and those still to be taken. It is important that you record your A levels or other examinations to be taken accurately and there are drop-down menus to help you. The results of examinations to be taken are sent directly to UCAS. They need to be able to match these against your application details, so they can be sent on to the universities to enable them to make their decisions. If they cannot do this, you may end up losing a place you might otherwise have secured.

If you are taking the exams of a non-UK country, you need to obtain the UK equivalent from NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre). If you go to www.naric.org.uk you can find out how your exam qualifications compare with those in the UK.

Courses applied for

You need to have selected the courses you want to apply for before completing the form. The maximum you can apply for is five, though you may apply for less. If you are applying for Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Medicine, you may only select four courses for these subjects. If you wish, you can use your remaining two choices for other subjects.

Personal Statement

This is a free form part of the form where the applicant has complete discretion about what to write. Its purpose is to allow the applicant to provide the universities with additional relevant information they can take into account in making the decision on a course offer. There is a strictly applied limit of 4000 characters (including spaces) for your Personal Statement.

The sort of things that would typically be covered in a Personal Statement would Include:

- ∩ the reasons for choosing the subject you want to study
- ∩ the experience and qualities you possess that are relevant to the subject
- ∩ any work experience and/or voluntary activity you have done, especially where this is related to your chosen subject
- ∩ your intended future career
- ∩ any achievements or other aspects of your life that may be of interest to Admissions Tutors.

If there is any unusual aspect to your application, use the Personal Statement to explain it. This might include setting out the reasons for deferring entry for a year, if this is what you have decided to do.

The Personal Statement is absolutely critical in differentiating your application from maybe thousands of others for the same course. This is the only place you can put in a personal bid to be considered e.g. school activities, intellectual activities, work experience. It can be particularly difficult for international students to complete the Personal Statement. We operate a panel of the most experienced university consultants in the UK and you can obtain help by clicking on the section **Expert Advice**.

If English is not your first language, you will need to have an IELTS or equivalent qualification at an appropriate level. If you have had opportunities to use your English in anyway, this is a good thing to include in your Personal Statement.

When do I submit my UCAS form?

You can use Apply from 1 September.

The final date for receipt of forms for Oxford and Cambridge, and also for Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science courses at any university is 15th October.

The final date for all other applications from the UK (other than Art and Design Route B) is 15th January.

Art and Design Route B applications (which involve portfolio inspection) must be submitted by 24th March

The final date for all other applications from outside the UK is 30th June.

Universities have the discretion to consider late applications from the UK which have missed the 15th January deadline up until 30th June.

What if I am taking a gap year?

If you plan to take a year out between finishing school and going to university, it is still best to apply during your final year at school. You are what is known as a 'deferred applicant'. Most universities are happy to consider deferred applicants. When completing your UCAS form, there is a place for you to indicate that you wish to defer. By doing this, you can sort out your place at university before starting your gap year, rather than having to sort it out while you are working or travelling. You must qualify for entry in the year of your application, even if you are taking a gap year

What happens after my application is submitted?

UCAS will send you by email, confirmation that they have received your application together with a unique application number.

In due course, you will be notified of the decisions of the universities you have selected. The decision will be one of the following three possibilities:

Unconditional offer (U) You already have met all the entry requirements of the course, and are offered a place without the need for further examination results etc

Conditional offer (C) The university is prepared to offer you a place on the course subject to your meeting additional requirements, normally specified examination grades being achieved. This is the most common situation and universities are used to dealing with applications in this way.

Rejection (R) No offer is made, either because you do not meet the requirements of the course or there are other better qualified applicants

You may be invited for interview by a university before a decision is made, although this is less frequent than it used to be. For some universities (including Oxford and Cambridge) and some courses (e.g. medicine), this is normal practice. If you decline to attend, you are most unlikely to be made an offer. Make sure you are prepared and act enthusiastically. Our Customised Consultancy Service

can prepare students for interviews.

If you receive an offer, whether unconditional or conditional, you are likely to be invited to visit the university concerned. It is worth going if you are able to do so, as it is a good way to find out more than you can glean from the prospectus or the university web site.

Wait till all the replies come back (by early May) and avoid emotional blackmail to give the first offering university a quick decision. See later section on how to reply.

What is the UCAS Tariff?

Conditional offers from universities are expressed as subjects and grades, subjects and points or just a total number of points. These points are based on the UCAS Tariff which is a system that allocates a numerical score to the wide range of UK qualifications now taken by applicants for university places. It is designed to establish an equivalence between the different qualifications and allow the scores to be aggregated.

The scores for the main UK qualifications are as follows -

GCE and VCE

Grade					Tariff points
GCE & AVCE Double Award	A level with additional AS (9 units)	GCE A level and AVCE	GCE AS Double Award	GCE AS & AS VCE	
A*A*					280
A*A					260
AA					240
AB					220
BB	A*A				200
BC	AA				180
	AB				170
CC					160
	BB				150
CD	BC	A*			140
DD	CC	A	AA		120
	CD		AB		110
DE		B	BB		100
	DD		BC		90
EE	DE	C	CC		80
			CD		70
	EE	D	DD	A	60
			DE	B	50
		E	EE	C	40
				D	30
				E	20

International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma

IB Diploma points	UCAS Tariff
45	720
44	698
43	676
42	654
41	632
40	611
39	589
38	567
37	545
36	523
35	501
34	479
33	457
32	435
31	413
30	392
29	370
28	348
27	326
26	304
25	282
24	260

Cambridge Pre-U

Grade	Principal Subject	Global Perspectives and Research	Short Course
D1	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
D2	145	140	To be confirmed
D3	130	126	60
M1	115	112	53
M2	101	98	46
M3	87	84	39
P1	73	70	32
P2	59	56	26
P3	46	42	20

How may I reply to offers?

If you have an unconditional offer, you can accept it as a confirmed acceptance. This means that you have a definite place at the university concerned and you are committed to that university.

By the end of the application process you can hold a maximum of two offers: a conditional offer as firm acceptance. This will be your first choice university among the offers you have been made, plus a second offer known as an 'insurance acceptance'. Usually this will be for a university that has made an offer with lower requirements.

If you are made an unconditional offer and you firmly accept it, the university is bound by the rules of UCAS to offer you a place. If you accept this unconditional offer, all your other offers must be declined.

However, if you hold conditional offers, you can keep one as a firm acceptance and a backup offer on lower grades as a provisional acceptance as 'insurance' until your examination results are known.

It is important that you reply to your offers. Failure to do so will result in UCAS deciding that you have 'declined by default' and your offers will be lost.

What is UCAS Extra?

UCAS Extra is a feature of UCAS that is designed for those who do not receive an offer from any of their six choices, or decline all the offers they receive.

If you find yourself in this category, UCAS will notify you. The UCAS web site has the details of the courses at universities that are willing to consider UCAS Extra applications. You may then contact the university directly or apply through the UCAS website for one of these courses.

Any offer made to you will be either unconditional or conditional, as above. You must either firmly accept it or reject it. If you accept, you are committed as

under the normal rules.

If you do not get an offer, or decline an offer that you get, you may try again, until the final date of 30 June.

What happens when I get my results?

Most students will have received a conditional offer. They therefore have to wait until they receive their results in August to see if they have been accepted.

If you have met the conditions of your firm choice, then you have a place on that course and the university is bound to accept you. Your place will shortly be confirmed by UCAS. If you accept their offer you are committed to that university and course.

If you have not met the conditions of your firm choice, you may still be offered a confirmed place by the university, particularly if you only just miss your grades. Whether this happens will depend upon how other students did and other factors about your application.

If you do not get a place at your confirmed choice, then your insurance choice comes into play. If you have met the conditions of their offer, then you will get a place on that course.

If you do not get the grades for your insurance choice either, you may still get a place on the insurance choice course if the university is still looking to make up a shortfall of applicants.

If you fail to get a place on either your firm choice or your insurance choice, then your next option is to use the Clearing System, which is described below.

What is the UCAS Clearing System?

The Clearing System is a process for matching students who do not have a university place with universities that have vacancies still unfilled.

Universities publish vacancy lists on their web sites. The UCAS web site also has Clearing vacancy lists, and they are published in newspapers too.

The onus is on the student to find a course that is acceptable to them (which may not be exactly the same as the courses originally selected for the UCAS application) at a university that is prepared to accept them.

This is done by the student calling the universities concerned. Providing they still have vacancies, they will take your details and give a very quick decision, possibly right away.

Extra Help

The application process is relatively straightforward for students who know exactly which course they want and whose projected exam grades match the university requirements. However, it can be mind boggling if you are unsure about your course or your grades or you are an international student unfamiliar with the process.

For those who feel the need for personal advice, we have a panel of highly experienced university consultants in the UK including the world renowned guru, Brian Heap. To take advantage of this special service go to the section on ***Expert Advice***.

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