PARENT, GUARDIAN, AND CARER GUIDE 2020

Everything you need
to support your child with their higher education choices

Which?

UCAS

About the Parent, Guardian, and Carer Guide

As a parent, guardian, or someone with caring responsibilities, you're likely to be one of the most important and trusted sources of information and advice to your child. With that in mind, UCAS and Which? have joined forces to bring you this guide.

It's designed to give you the tools to guide and support a young person applying to study at university or college in 2020, through their decision-making and the UCAS application process.

If you have any questions, find out how to get in touch at **ucas.com/contact-us**.

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UCAS terms explained

Throughout the application process, you'll come across a number of terms you may not be familiar with. Go to **ucas.com/ucas-terms-explained** to find out what they mean.

PRE-APPLICATION PLANNING, AND EXPLORING THEIR OPTIONS

Before your child starts their application, there's a lot to consider. **Here's all the key information**, and the things they'll need bear in mind.

KEY DATES AT A GLANCE

2019

- **7 May**: Courses starting in 2020 are available in the UCAS search tool.
- **21 May**: UCAS Undergraduate Apply – the application system for those applying to courses starting in 2020 – becomes available for registration only, allowing your child to start filling in their application.
- **4 September**: Completed applications can be paid for and sent to UCAS. Applications can't be sent until all sections are complete, the reference is added, and the application fee has been paid.
- **15 October (18:00 UK time)**: Deadline for applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and for most courses in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine/science. An application can still be sent after this date, but the universities and colleges concerned cannot guarantee they'll give it equal consideration.

Further dates are available at ucas.com/key-dates.

2020

- **15 January (18:00 UK time)**: Deadline for most undergraduate courses. An application can still be sent after this date, but the universities and colleges concerned cannot guarantee they'll give it equal consideration.
- **25 February**: Extra opens.
- **30 June (18:00 UK time)**: Last date for receipt of applications. Applications received after this deadline are automatically entered into Clearing.
- **5 July (18:00 UK time)**: Extra closes.
- **6 July**: Clearing opens, and vacancies are shown in the UCAS search tool.
- **4 August**: SQA results day.
- **13 August**: A level results day.
- **13 August**: Adjustment opens.
- **21 September (18:00 UK time)**: Final deadline for applications to courses starting in 2020.

TIP: Encourage your child to leave contingency time before the UCAS deadline in case something goes wrong, for example, loss of internet access, card payment failure, or if the reference isn't added in time. If they're applying through their school or college, it will be a member of staff who sends their application to us.

HOW TO PAY FOR UNI

One of the biggest concerns for students and their parents is the cost of university. Here's a breakdown of what you need to know about fees, finance, and repayment.

This information has been provided in association with Student Loans Company.

Tuition fees

Your child will typically pay up to £9,250 per year in tuition fees as a UK student, though for many courses it's less.

Fees don't need to be paid upfront. Students can apply for a tuition fee loan to cover all or part of their fees.

Because of the way the system works (see the 'Repayment' section), taking out a loan yourself to cover the cost of fees and avoid your child getting into debt will almost always work out more expensive in the long run, so it's not advisable.

Living costs

The second loan they can apply for is the maintenance loan, to help towards living expenses while at university, such as accommodation, food, and course materials.

The amount they're eligible to borrow depends on several factors, including where they will be studying and your household income. You'll need to declare this information to receive the maximum amount available.

For example, if they'll be living away from home (outside of London), a maintenance loan of up to £9,203 per year could be available for households earning £25,000 per year or less. If you're earning more than this, the loan amount your child is eligible for will be lower, meaning they or you will need to make up any financial shortfall.

Calculate how much it will cost your child to live at university by going to **ucas.com/budget-calculator**.

Extra support

Grants are no longer available, but there is extra support available in certain circumstances.

- **Scholarships and bursaries** – offered on the basis of academic ability, your income, or for other reasons (for example, if your child has a disability).
- **Fee waivers** – these reduce tuition fees, either on their own, or in a broader package of support with a bursary.
- **Hardship funds** – these can help if your child is struggling financially, either before or during uni.
- **Disabled Students' Allowances** (DSAs) – if your child has a disability, including a long-term health condition, mental health condition, or specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia they might be able to get funds to cover extra costs. How much they get depends on their individual needs, not your household income. DSAs can be applied for alongside the main student finance application and don't usually have to be paid back unless your child leaves their course early.

Applying

There's no need for your child to wait to receive offers back from universities to apply for student finance – they can usually do this from February with the student funding body for where they currently live (see 'Location matters').

To make sure they receive their loans on time, remind them to provide their supporting evidence as soon as possible!

Student loans are only repayable after graduation, once your child is earning over a certain salary.

Supporting your child's application

If your child is applying for student finance that depends on your household income, you'll need to give the Student Loans Company (SLC) some financial details, such as your National Insurance number and details of your household income.

To do this, you'll need to create an account at **www.gov.uk/studentfinance** if you live in England, or **www.studentfinancewales.co.uk** if you live in Wales. The SLC will confirm this information with HMRC and use it to work out how much student finance your child can get. In some cases, they might need to contact you to ask for specific evidence of your household income – this could include photocopies of your P60 or tax return. Don't worry if this happens – it's just part of their checks to make sure your child gets the funding they're entitled to. Once they've finished with your documents, they'll securely destroy them.

Repayment

Importantly, this isn't based on how much your child has borrowed, but instead on how much they go on to earn.

Currently, the earnings threshold is set at £25,725 a year, £2,143 a month and £494 a week for English and Welsh undergraduate students (£18,935 for Scottish and Northern Irish students). This is the point at which they'll begin to pay back 9% of what they're earning over the threshold. Earning less than that? Then they won't pay anything back.

Once your child starts repaying their loan, it will be automatically collected through PAYE, so they won't be able to fall behind on their repayments.

While the loans do accrue interest, any outstanding debt still owed after 30 years is written off, meaning it's not always worth helping your child pay back their loan early. Student loans won't appear on their credit file either.

Which? University can help you help your child get on top of student finance, budgets, and money matters. Head to **www.which.co.uk/student-finance** to find out more.

The Student Loans Company's quick start guide – **www.gov.uk/repaying-your-student-loan** – has more information about how they'll repay their student loan, how much they'll repay, and the interest involved.

Location matters

We've mainly covered the system in England, but if you live elsewhere in the UK, the fees, loans, repayment, and cost of living will be different.

If your child lives in:

- England they could pay up to £9,250 in tuition fees. Apply to Student Finance England at **www.gov.uk/student-finance**.
- Scotland and goes to a Scottish university, they won't pay tuition fees. Apply for maintenance loans via the Student Awards Agency Scotland at **www.saas.gov.uk**.
- Wales and goes to a Welsh uni, they can get a Tuition Fee Loan to cover the fees charged. Apply to Student Finance Wales at **www.studentfinancewales.co.uk**.
- Northern Ireland and studies in NI too, they can get a Tuition Fee Loan to cover the fees charged. Apply to Student Finance NI at **www.studentfinanceni.co.uk**.

PLANNING THEIR FUTURE

It's important students consider their post-school plans early – but with so many options, where should they start?

Subject ideas

A few light conversations over dinner or while watching TV – as opposed to an intimidating sit down talk about 'the future' – is probably the best way to get them thinking about their next steps.

If that step is university, but they're struggling to get inspired by a particular subject, try to get them thinking about potential areas of study, in terms of:

- **a subject they study now**
  If it's the subject they love and are best at, get them to consider whether it's going to keep them interested for the next few years, and which career path(s) it might lead to.
- **a subject related to a career**
  If they already have more vocational ambitions, explore together whether they need to study a particular degree subject to get a job in that field, or if the options are more flexible.
- **a completely new subject**
  There are many degree-level disciplines they won't have encountered in their studies before. Assess their suitability for these with an open mind, relating each back to what they enjoy and how they learn best.

Early decisions

The decisions your child makes early on, even as far back as GCSE (or equivalent) options, can have an impact on what – and where – they end up studying for their degree. It all depends on what they want to do in the future, but some extra thought early on could pay off later down the line.

Choosing GCSEs, National 5s, A levels, Highers, or BTECs (or equivalent)

If your child has an idea of what they want to study...

Get them to check the entry requirements – these may mention particular subjects or qualifications they'll need, as well as any grades they'll need to get on to the course.

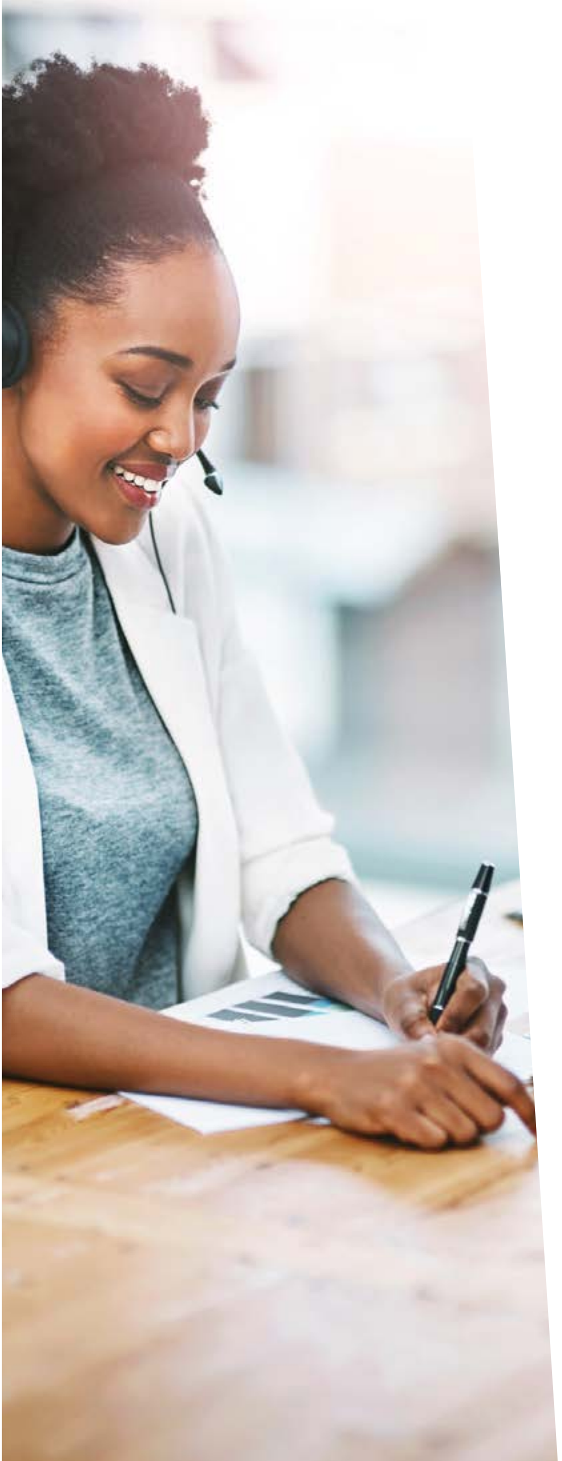
They might not be able to apply to certain courses without having taken specific qualifications – for example, GCSE chemistry may be a requirement for medicine courses.

Most university courses have minimum GCSE entry requirements in English and maths.

What if they're still undecided about university?

It's not unusual for young people to be unsure about their future at this stage, so try not to worry! Encourage them to keep their options open by selecting commonly asked for subjects in university entry requirements. These are known as 'facilitating' subjects, and include the sciences, English, geography, history, maths, and languages. Doing what they enjoy most and are good at is always a good idea too, as this is usually the subject(s) they'll do best in and go on to study. If your child is currently studying A levels and looking for ideas on what to study at uni, point them towards **www.which.co.uk/alevelexplorer** – it helps students discover degree options based on different subject combinations, powered by what other students went on to do.

Remember to be a positive sounding board – being pushy, or putting pressure on your child to follow a certain career or degree path, can be counter-productive. Keep conversations positive and aspirational.



ALTERNATIVES TO UNIVERSITY

When researching post-16 plans, it's important your child weighs up all their options. If university isn't the answer (or at least not right now) there are other options to consider.

What are their options?

Apprenticeships – a good way to gain the skills, qualifications, and experience needed to get into many careers. They combine work, training, and study without the fees, letting apprentices 'earn while they learn'.

What do apprenticeships involve?

Apprentices spend most of the week at work (a minimum of 30 hours), where they focus on learning to do a job.

They learn from colleagues across all levels of the business, typically working closely with someone more senior, who will monitor and review their progress. They will also spend time attending college, university, or a training provider, or training at work.

Apprentices complete assessments during and at the end of the programme, which test both academic learning and occupational competence.

Who are apprenticeships for?

Higher and degree apprenticeships will suit someone who:

- has a clear idea of the type of career they wish to pursue, and is willing to commit to a vocational pathway
- wishes to continue with higher education-level study, but would prefer a more practical and work-related approach to study
- is ready to start work with an employer and be based in the workplace the majority of the time
- is well organised and able to cope with the competing demands of work and academic study at the same time
- is ready to be assessed through a mix of assignments and written work, including essays, reports, practical exercises, end tests, and exams

What are the benefits?

- Apprentices are employed and paid a wage throughout the course.
- Apprentices will gain a full degree – bachelor's or master's – without needing to pay student fees. Employers contribute, and the remaining funding comes from the government. This means degree apprentices can graduate debt-free, earning a wage at the same time.
- Apprentices will gain a head start in their chosen profession, and receive professional accreditation and membership.

An apprenticeship is not an easy option. Apprentices have to prove themselves in the workplace, while getting to grips with studying for a higher or degree-level qualification. They'll be expected to achieve academically and at work, managing their time and adjusting to longer hours, with fewer holidays than at school, college, or university. They might have to travel or relocate to find the right opportunity.

To find out more about apprenticeships, check out:

ucas.com/apprenticeships

What else is available to my child after school or college?

The world of work – get them to develop their CV, check out job ads, and speak with recruiters to get a sense of different job markets, including school leaver programmes.

Deferred entry to uni – spend time gaining work experience or completing a gap year to build up skills, knowledge, and confidence before higher education.

The UCAS Hub is packed with all the information and tools your child needs to explore their options in one place. From exploring subjects and considering apprenticeships, to shortlisting their choices and writing a killer personal statement or CV. Visit ucas.com/hub to find out more.

HOW YOU CAN HELP WITH RESEARCHING THEIR OPTIONS

If your child decides university is the right path for them, there's still a lot of research to do, with over 35,000 undergraduate courses to choose from.

Step 1 – Get online

- Use the UCAS search tool at **ucas.com/search** to find and shortlist undergraduate courses at universities, colleges, and conservatoires (collectively referred to as course providers). Each search result lists a summary of the course, how and when to apply, fees and finances associated with the course, and information on the entry requirements the course provider is looking for.

Entry requirements are set by course providers, as a guideline of the academic ability students will need, and are usually a mix of qualifications, subjects, and/or exam grades.

- Point them to online step-by-step guidance to choosing a course at **ucas.com/choosing-a-course**, which covers choosing a subject, the right type of degree, how to study, and where to study.
- Take a look at university, college, or conservatoire websites for in-depth details about their facilities and courses, and explore the campus with their virtual tour at **ucas.com/virtual-tours**.
- Speak to current undergraduates on **ucas.com/chat-to-students** for the chance to ask questions and gain valuable insight into what life at uni is really like.

Step 2 – Get out and about

- UCAS exhibitions are the perfect opportunity to meet universities, colleges, other course providers, and UCAS in person, get your questions answered, and find out what's available. They're free and take place all across the UK, so there's bound to be one near you – go to **ucas.com/exhibitions** to find and book a place at your local event!
- University and college open days give you the chance to look around, meet staff and students, and see if your child would be happy living and studying there. They're great for giving you peace of mind that wherever they end up studying, you know they will be in a familiar place they're comfortable with. Use the open days search tool at **ucas.com/opendays** to find out when the university they're interested in is holding its next open day.
- Taster courses are tailored to specific courses or subjects, and often include lectures and hands-on workshops to give your child a feel for what it would be like to study that particular course. You can find them at **ucas.com/taster-courses**.

Step 3 – Get informed

Entry requirements

It's really important your child understands the entry requirements for courses they're interested in, so they can make fully informed choices about courses that are right for them.

Some uni and college entry requirements will be based on Tariff points. The UCAS Tariff is used by universities and colleges to make broad comparisons between qualifications used for entry to higher education. Tariff points are allocated to a wide range of qualifications, and can be added together (within certain rules) to give an overall Tariff score.

Go to **ucas.com/tariff** to find out more and to use the UCAS Tariff calculator – a handy tool to help your child find out how many Tariff points their qualifications and grades add up to.

Know the UCAS deadlines

Depending on which course and uni or college they've chosen, your child will have a UCAS application deadline which they'll need to meet. It's important they check the date for their chosen courses, so they leave themselves plenty of time to complete their application.

Visit ucas.com/whentoapply to find out more.

HELP YOUR CHILD STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

There's a lot more to a university – or a job – application than academic achievements.

Admissions tutors and employers want to see how applicants have built up skills and experience outside of their studies too.

Work experience and internships

Before uni

Work experience looks great on a personal statement, but only if your child can reflect on what they learnt from it, and how it's relevant to the course they're applying for.

Work experience doesn't always have to be in a relevant industry – at this stage, just gaining some experience in the workplace is more important.

Using a real work experience example to answer the all-important question 'why should we give you a place on this course?' is bound to impress. For those looking to study medicine, for example, work experience that shows an interest in caring professions would be valuable – like nursery, preschools, or care home experience.

At uni

Getting some professional experience, ideally relevant to your child's chosen industry, will be looked on favourably by employers, and will help them decide if a particular career is right for them.

Part-time work

Before uni

Even a Saturday job in a shop can demonstrate potential to admissions tutors. Encourage your child to be specific and describe a situation they've dealt with. How did they handle the situation? What did they learn? Get them to keep it relevant to the course, and describe how the skills link to their degree work. If they've developed strong communication skills as a result of interacting with customers, they should mention how they would put them to good use when presenting ideas in seminars, for example.

At uni

A part-time job can equip them with transferable skills, show they can balance work with their studies, and help cover living costs.

Volunteering

Before uni

Doing voluntary work at a younger age shows that an applicant has drive. It is often a good way of building up communication and interaction skills too, so help your child reflect on these in their personal statement.

At uni

Volunteering could give your child the opportunity to gain more hands-on experience in a particular role than they would in a part-time job, or even through work experience. Many smaller charities are willing to give students more responsibility, as they don't have the funds to pay lots of staff.

Clubs and hobbies

Before uni

Talking about other interests or hobbies helps inject some personality into their statement. Before it goes in, they should ask themselves 'so what?'. Less can sometimes be more – only include an example if it's relevant.

At uni

The key words here are moderation and motivation. They should be picky, and avoid the temptation to sign up to everything in freshers' week. It's far better to actively contribute to one or two societies or initiatives so they have something more meaningful to put on their CV and job applications.

Key points

- Draw on how each experience helped them learn, and how it's relevant to what they're applying for. Working in a supermarket can do this just as well as a high-flying internship.
- Make sure everything in their application is relevant – if it doesn't add anything, leave it out, no matter how much they enjoyed it.
- The more experience gained in a relevant industry during university, the better their chances of gaining employment in that area.
- Voluntary work is a great way of taking on responsibility in a chosen field, and often provides more opportunities to do so than in a commercial environment.

MAKING A UCAS APPLICATION

If your child has decided university is the right path for them, here's **what they'll need to know** about making a UCAS application.

CONSIDERING MUSIC, DANCE, OR DRAMA?

If your child is thinking of a career in music, dance, or drama, they can choose between applying through the UCAS Undergraduate or UCAS Conservatoires application schemes. Both universities and conservatoires offer undergraduate degrees.

TIP: If your child isn't sure which type of course will suit them best, they can apply through both application schemes. If they get a place in both, they'll need to decide which to take up.

What does conservatoire study involve?

- A conservatoire is a course provider that specialises in performance-based courses, but also includes academic study.
- All courses at conservatoires have a strong vocational, performance-based focus, and course structures are reflective of the industry.
- If your child's interests are in a practical discipline, such as vocal performance or dance, they may favour a conservatoire.
- All teaching staff at conservatoires are working professionals. There is a strong emphasis on one-to-one tuition, alongside group work and performances.

The deadlines for conservatoire applications are:

– **1 October 2019** (18:00 UK time) for music courses

– **15 January 2020** (18:00 UK time) for most dance, drama, and musical theatre courses

There are some exceptions, so check conservatoires' websites.

The application deadline dates are different to those listed on page 3, so they'll need to carefully check details of courses they're interested in using the **UCAS search tool**.

How to apply for conservatoire courses

Students can apply for courses at conservatoires through UCAS Conservatoires. Similar to UCAS Undergraduate applications, they'll need to register before they start filling in their application.

For more information and advice about applying to and studying at a conservatoire, go to **ucas.com/conservatoires/getting-started**.

CONSIDERING TEACHING?

If your child is considering a career as a teacher, they need Initial Teacher Education or Training (ITET), based at a university, school, or college in the UK.

How to apply

If your child is an undergraduate, or a graduate looking for a training programme in Scotland, they will need to apply through the UCAS Undergraduate route.

If they already have an undergraduate degree and are based in England or Wales, they will need to make their application through UCAS Teacher Training.

There are several different ways of becoming a teacher, and it's important students do their research to find the route that suits them best.

Each involves:

- a minimum of 24 weeks in at least two schools, to give practical classroom experience
- academic study to provide the knowledge and understanding to teach successfully
- tutoring in classroom management
- mentoring from experienced professionals
- an assessment of your child's teaching skills through observed classes

Head to ucas.com/teaching-in-the-uk to find out what the options are, and how to apply to each.

They can train as either an undergraduate, or as a postgraduate if they already have a degree.

Point them towards ucas.com/teaching-in-the-uk for information on what they need to do, and to sign up for a free information pack, which will help them navigate their way through the postgraduate application process.

HOW TO FILL IN THE UCAS APPLICATION

Once your child has chosen the unis and courses that interest them most, it's time to start their application.

First, they'll need to register – it only takes about five minutes to enter their basic details and set up security information. If your child is applying through a school, they'll be given a 'buzzword' so their application can be linked to their school.

If they're applying independently, there will be a few additional questions they'll need to answer. Once they've registered, there are seven sections to complete – before they get started, get them to watch our short video guide at **ucas.com/fillinginyourapplication**.

1. **Personal details** – This will already contain the information they gave when registering, and there will be more questions about student support and where they live.
2. **Additional information** – If your child has a UK address, they'll be asked a few equality questions, and details about any preparation they've done for higher education.
3. **Student finance** – this will only appear for UK and EU students who have answered certain questions in the personal details section.
4. **Choices** – They can make up to five course choices (but only four for courses in medicine, dentistry, or veterinary medicine/science).
5. **Education** – They'll need to provide a list of all the schools they've been to since the age of 11, including the dates they were there, all their exam results (pass or fail), and details of any exams still to be taken.
6. **Personal statement** – This is their opportunity to convince the university or college to offer them a place. See our guidance on how to write a personal statement.
7. **Employment** – If they have a part-time job, they should include the basic details here. They can talk more about this in their personal statement.

Your child can fill in their application at any time, saving their progress as they go. They can go back and edit it until they're happy it's complete. Finally, there's a section for the reference, which is added by their referee – usually their teacher, but this can also be an employer or trainer for students applying independently.

How much does it cost to send a UCAS application?

The application fee is £20 if they're applying to just one course, or £25 for multiple courses, and for late applications sent after 30 June.

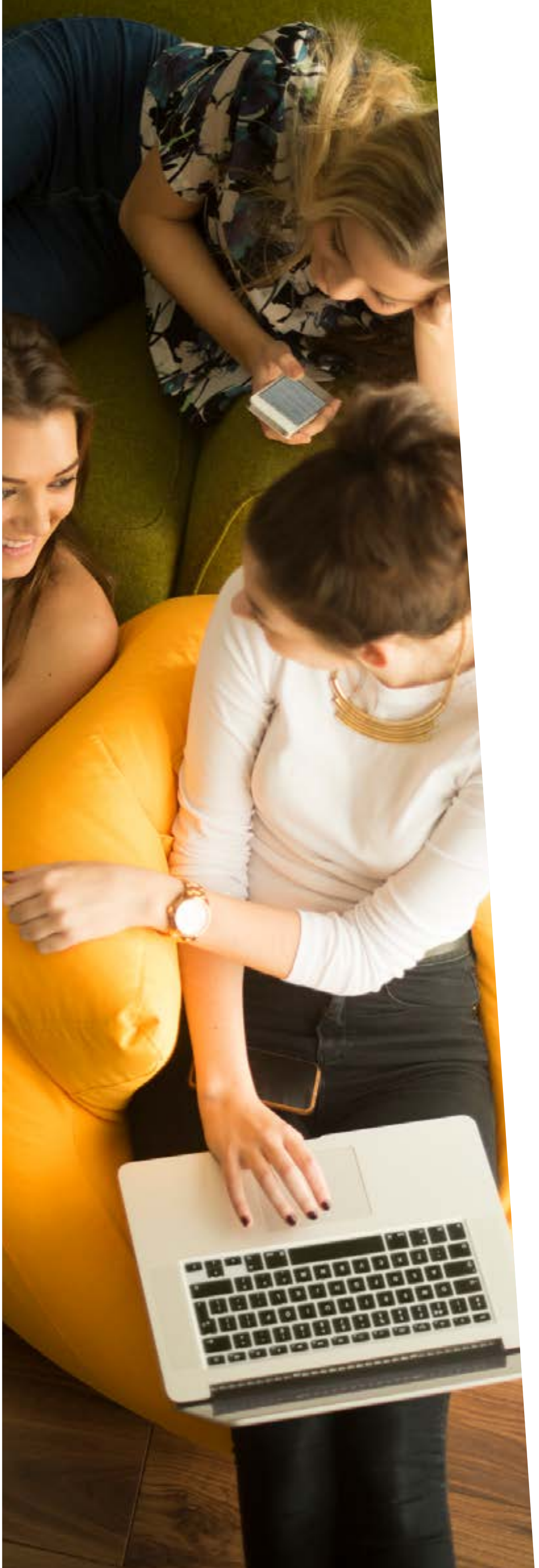
What does a school do?

If your child is applying through a school, pressing 'Send' on their application sends it to their school, not directly to UCAS. Once they've completed their application, there's still a lot for their school to do. That's why most schools will set an internal deadline, which is earlier than the UCAS application deadline. This gives them time to check their students' applications to make sure all sections have been filled in correctly, support those struggling with their application, and write and add references for all their students.

Once all this has been completed, the school will need to pay for and send their students' applications. They will often arrange payment beforehand, so they can do it all in one go. Encourage your child to speak to their teacher to check internal application and payment deadlines

TIP: In the 'Personal details' section of the application, there's the option for your child to add your name for 'nominated access'. This allows you to contact UCAS – or the universities they have applied to – on their behalf to discuss the status of their application. Just make sure you have their Personal ID handy and can answer basic security questions when you call.

Universities and UCAS are not able to talk to you about the specifics of your child's application, unless you have nominated access.



HELP YOUR CHILD WRITE A GREAT PERSONAL STATEMENT

Your child may find writing their personal statement the most difficult part of the application process – they're not alone, as everyone finds it hard!

For most applicants, it will be the first time they've had to write reflectively about themselves. Taking a positive approach, and leaving enough time to do a good job, really can make your child's application stand out from the crowd.

Help your child think about what to write and how to structure it, with UCAS' personal statement tool – **ucas.com/personalstatement**.

Not only is it a great tool to get them thinking about what they should be writing about, but it also tracks the characters they use, making sure they keep to the 4,000 limit.

To get started, encourage them to:

- think about what makes them interesting, and what makes them stand out in a positive way
- write down a whole load of words – anything that shows why they're excited about the course(s) they're applying for
- remember why they chose the subject
- list work experience or other activities as supporting evidence, to show why they'd make a great student
- think about skills they could use on the course, such as leadership, communication, and time management
- ask you, their teacher, and their friends for ideas and feedback

'I WAS ABLE TO TALK HIM THROUGH ALL OF HIS POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES AND HELP HIM HIGHLIGHT THESE IN A WAY THAT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL IN STUDYING HIS CHOSEN COURSE.'

Pulling it together

Taking all those ideas, and structuring them into a perfect personal statement of up to 4,000 characters, is the next step. There are four key parts to a good personal statement:

1. **First part** – a punchy opening paragraph, showing their excitement for and understanding of the course. What makes them want to study it over any other course?
2. **Middle part** – evidence to support their interest in the course. They should include why it interests them, why they're suitable (relevant skills, work experience, and inspirational moments will all sit here), and any activities they've taken part in that demonstrate their interest in the course or subject area.
3. **Final part** – this is where they write about themselves, what they're interested in, and how well they will fit in to university life. This could include achievements they're proud of, positions of responsibility they've held, and attributes that make them interesting, special, or unique.
4. **Closing paragraph** – a concise statement which leaves the reader with a clear understanding of why they are perfect for the course.

TIP: A good personal statement:

- is relevant and focused – don't waste the 4,000 characters
- uses clear, plain English
- avoids clichés
- is original – UCAS' software scans all personal statements for plagiarism
- is redrafted multiple times until it's right

Don't forget, they can apply to more than one course, but can only write one personal statement, so it has to be relevant to all.

For personal statement pointers and handy resources to help your child create their first draft, go to **ucas.com/how-write-ucas-undergraduate-personal-statement**.

'ONCE SHE HAD HER FIRST DRAFT, I READ THROUGH IT AND SUPPORTED HER WITH EDITING IT DOWN TO A CONCISE STATEMENT, AND HELPING WITH THINGS LIKE GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION.'

JOURNEY OF AN APPLICATION

Apply online

Explore subjects in the UCAS Hub and find courses in the search tool. Check entry requirements and application deadlines:

15 October at 18:00 (UK time) – all courses at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and most courses in medicine, veterinary science/medicine, and dentistry.

15 January at 18:00 (UK time) – the majority of undergraduate courses.

Wait to hear back

Universities or colleges will decide whether to make you an offer. It'll be:

- unconditional if you've already met the entry requirements
- conditional if the offer's based on your exam results

If you're not accepted by your choices, or you decline any offers you receive, you can use Extra to apply for more choices, one at a time.

Reply to your offers

Once all the decisions are in, you have to reply to your offers by a specific deadline.

- Select a firm choice – this is your first choice.
- If your firm choice is conditional, select an insurance choice too, if you want – this is a back-up.
- Decline any other offers.

Find out if you've got a place

You'll see in Track if your place is confirmed.

- If your firm choice is unconditional, the place is yours!
- If your place is conditional, the university or college will update your status when they have your exam results, or other evidence you've met the conditions.
- You may be unsuccessful if you don't meet the conditions – in this case, you can use Clearing to apply for more courses.

If you do better than you expected, and meet and exceed the conditions of your firm choice, you can look for an alternative course using Adjustment, if you want to.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Once your child has sent their application to UCAS, there's still a lot for them to do. It's important to keep them engaged and make sure they're prepared for all outcomes. **Here's what they'll need to be aware of...**

WHAT HAPPENS ONCE UCAS GETS THEIR APPLICATION?

1. Your child's personal statement is checked to make sure it has not been copied, then all the information in their application is processed. This can take up to 48 hours.
2. They will then be sent a welcome email when the checks are complete. This explains how to use Track to check the progress of their application, and contains their Personal ID, which they'll need to sign in.
3. At the same time, the application is sent to their chosen universities and colleges. Universities won't know where else they've applied.
4. As soon as universities let UCAS know about an interview, audition, test, or decision, your child will receive an email so they know to check Track.

Types of decisions a university can make

Receiving a conditional or unconditional offer is good news, but it's important to know the difference and commitment they're making if they accept one.

- A conditional offer means your child needs to meet some conditions – usually exam results. If they accept a conditional offer as their firm choice, they are committed to taking up the place if they meet the conditions.
- An unconditional offer means the place is theirs if they want it. They still might have to meet non-academic conditions, such as a health check. If they accept an unconditional offer as their firm choice, they are committed to taking up the place, regardless of what grades they get.
- An unsuccessful application means the university has decided not to offer them a place.
- A withdrawn application means the choice has been withdrawn, either by your child, or by the university. If the university has done this, they'll let your child know why.

Once they've had decisions from all their choices, your child can reply to them.

Making changes to their application

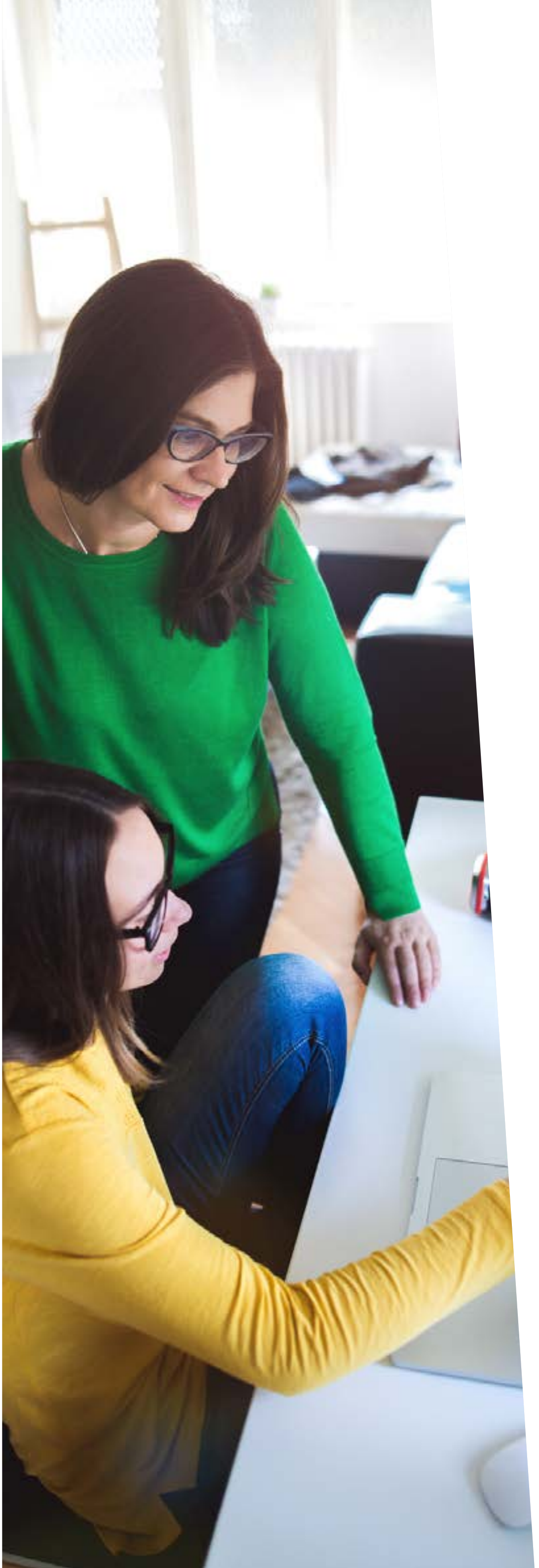
After your child has sent their application, they may need to change their contact details or qualifications. It's really important to keep these details up-to-date, so they don't miss any correspondence or deadlines.

- They'll need to call UCAS to change their name, qualifications, and school or college. If their exam details change, they must let us know straight away by completing our qualifications amendment form – **ucas.com/amend-qualifications** – and let their chosen unis/colleges know too. If any of these details aren't correct, your child's results may not be sent to their chosen unis, causing all sorts of stress and panic on results day.
- They can change their contact details in Track. We'll let their chosen unis/colleges know, but it's a good idea if your child contacts them too.
- If they want to change their course, the year they'll start their studies, or the point of entry, they'll need to get in touch with the uni/college. If they agree to it, they'll let UCAS know. If your child already has an offer from the uni/college, Track will be updated to show the new details.
- If they wish to change the university or college they've applied to, they can swap a choice for a different one within 14 days of the date on their welcome email. If it's within seven days of the date on their welcome email, they can swap the choice in Track – otherwise, they'll need to call UCAS.

Find out more about making changes to their application at **ucas.com/makingchanges**.

Be wary of incentivised offers!

Some unis will offer your child an incentive (often things like cash, technology, or a guaranteed place in halls of residence) if they accept their offer as their firm choice. Though these offers can sound tempting, it's vital that your child makes their decision for the right reasons. They don't want to be stuck studying their second favourite course for a few years, wishing they had chosen the course they really wanted to study.



REPLYING TO OFFERS

When your child has received decisions from all their choices, they'll need to reply to any offers they have. Make sure they're accepting the right offer, for the right reasons.

Before they reply, they will need to:

- understand the conditions of their offer – if they're not sure, they should contact the university
- visit the university or college – if they haven't already done so, it's good to check if it's somewhere they'll be happy
- discuss any individual needs with the university – for example, if they have a disability, so everything is in place when they start the course
- check the tuition fees – it's important to know what they are before accepting the offer
- take time to compare their offers, to make sure they're happy with those they want to accept and those they don't

What replies can they make?

Your child can accept an offer as their firm or insurance choice.

Firm choice

- For a conditional offer, they will be guaranteed a place on the course if they meet the conditions.
- For an unconditional offer, the place is theirs.
- In either case, they are committed to that course at that university or college.

Insurance choice

This has the same level of commitment as a firm choice, but only comes into play if your child doesn't meet the conditions of their firm choice – it's like a second chance to get a place. It makes sense for the insurance choice to have less demanding conditions than the firm choice.

When do they need to reply by?

Your child will have a deadline to reply to the offers they receive, which depends on when they received the last one. The table below shows the official deadline dates, but it's really important they check Track to see their personal deadline.

If they don't reply to their offers by their deadline, any offers they have will be automatically declined on their behalf – this is called decline by default.

Last decision received on or before...	Means their reply date is...
31 March 2020	**5 May 2020** (if their postal address is in the EU)
6 May 2020	**4 June 2020**
4 June 2020	**18 June 2020**
13 July 2020	**20 July 2020**

How can you help?

Narrowing down a potential five offers to decide their firm and insurance choices can be difficult. This is where you can serve as a valuable sounding board.

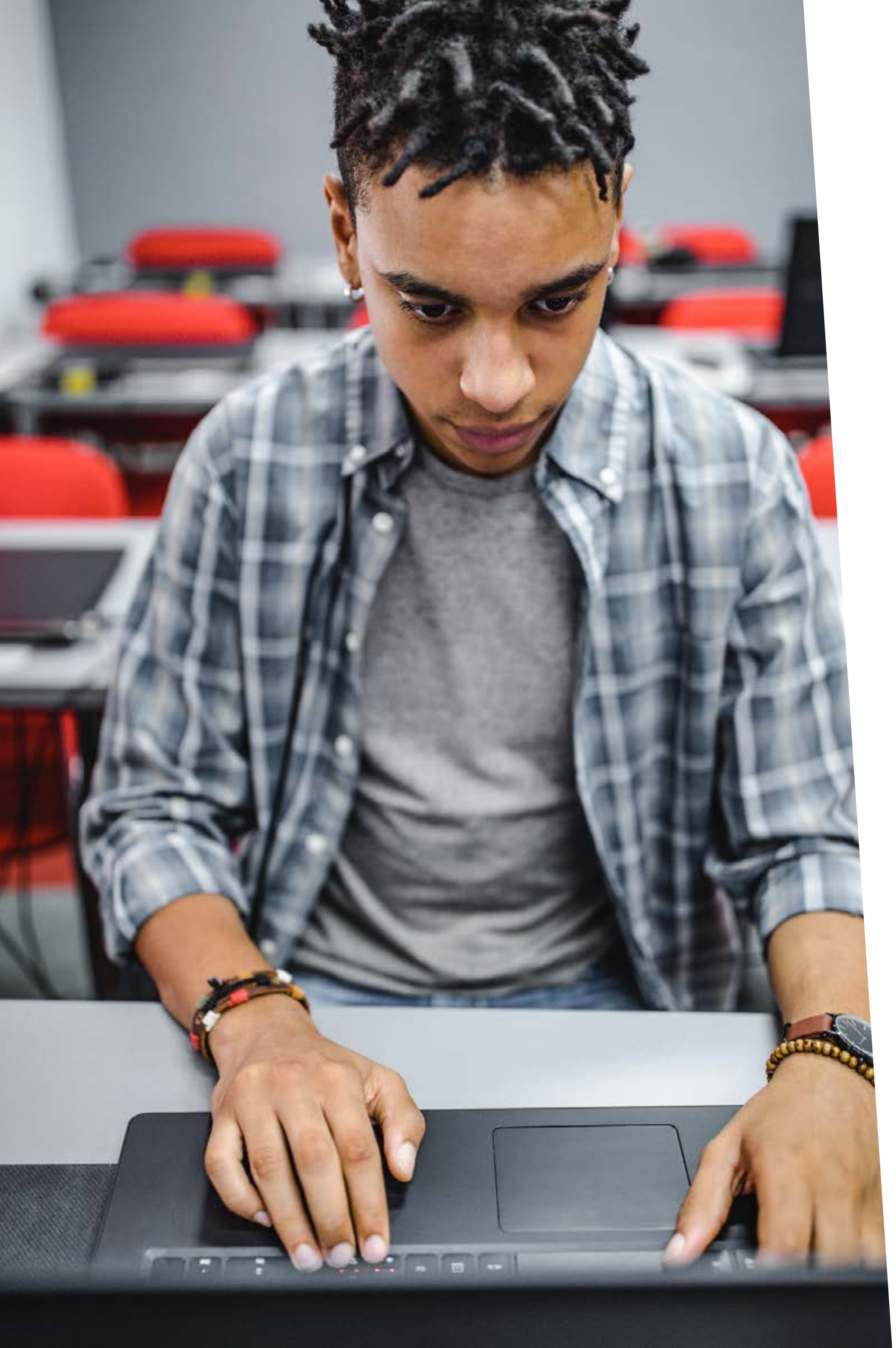
If they're unsure what to do, talk to them about what they want to get out of a course and their university experience. Has this changed at all in the last few months? How do these offers align with their goals or preferences?

Remind them their firm choice should be their first choice. Ask them if the offer is achievable, and if there is any flexibility if they don't get the grades they were expecting.

Their right to change their mind

The UCAS application process complies with consumer law and the Competition and Markets Authority's advice. This means that after they've sent their application to UCAS, they have 14 days in which to cancel their application and receive a full refund, should they wish to do so.

When they've replied to their offers, they have 14 days in which they can change their replies, but can only do so once.



PREPARING A PLAN B

Things don't always work out as expected, so it pays to spend time devising some alternative plans.

Competition can be tough, meaning even the best students don't always get the offers they'd hoped for. Alternatively, they might receive offers for courses they're no longer interested in.

So what can they do instead?

Extra

Extra is an opportunity for your child to apply for another course without waiting for Clearing. In the last five years, over **40,000** people have secured a place at university or college using Extra.

It doesn't cost anything, but they must be eligible to use Extra:

- All five choices must have been used.
- They must either have no offers, or have declined any offers they received.

Extra opens on 25 February 2020 and ends on 5 July 2020.

For more details, go to **ucas.com/extra**.

A year out

They may wish to reapply next year for slightly different courses or universities. Now is a good time to start thinking about what a productive gap year would look like, to make sure they get the most out of it.

An alternative path

Studying abroad might be a viable alternative – there may even be vacancies available on English-speaking courses at certain European unis. What about a different qualification entirely, or entering the world of work instead?

Look into their other options at **ucas.com/what-are-my-options**.

Near miss on their grades

Think positively. Even in the event they don't achieve the grades they were expecting or needing, your child's firm choice university may still accept them.

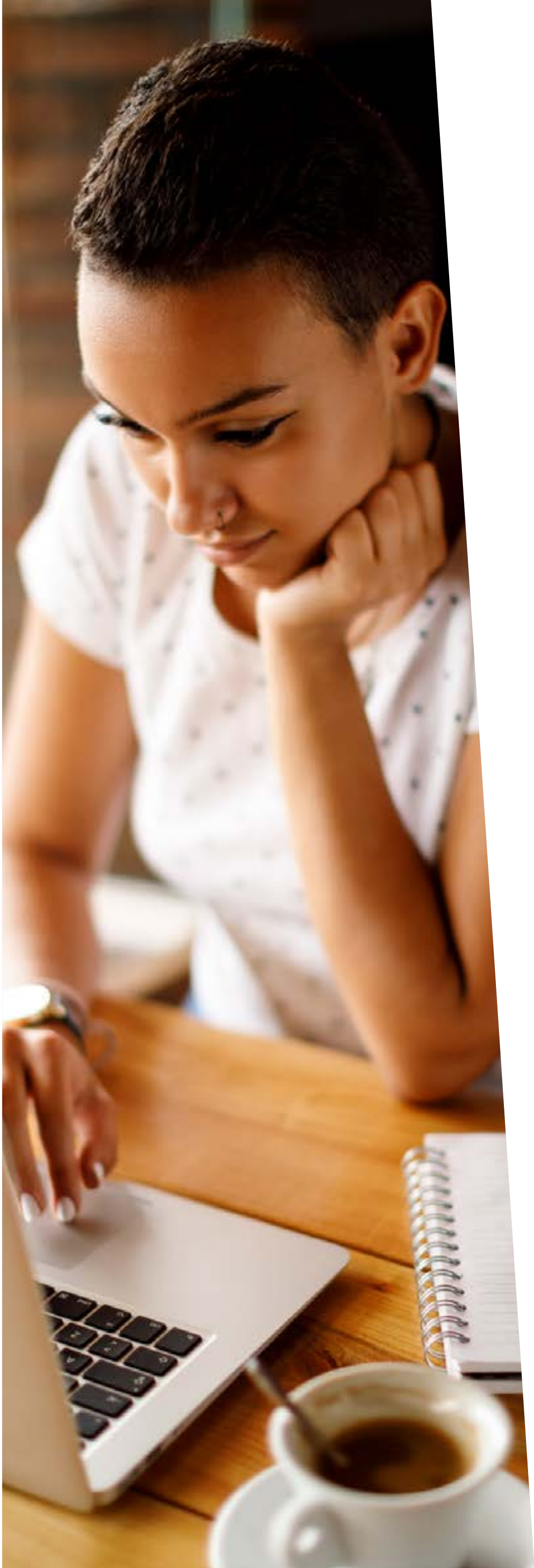
Retakes

Depending on their results, they might also decide to resit a subject before reapplying. This means more exams next summer, finding somewhere to sit them, and probably some extra tuition.

Exam reviews and appeals

If your child is unhappy with an exam result, and feel it's been unfairly marked, they should first talk to their school or college about appealing the grade (they won't be able to enquire directly with the examining board themselves).

They will also be able to advise you based on outcomes for that exam across your child's year group. Head to **ucas.com/exam-reviews-and-appeals** for step-by-step advice on the grade appeals process.



GETTING EXAM RESULTS

Results day can be stressful, so make sure your child knows how it works and what to expect.

- UCAS receives exam results, matches them to applicants, and makes them available to universities and colleges.
- Universities then check the offer details and confirm if the conditions have been met.
- If the university has confirmed their place, this will be shown clearly in Track.

There is restricted access to Track in the lead up to SQA results day and A level results day, while UCAS processes results – details of when it's available will be clearly displayed on ucas.com.

Getting their results

UCAS doesn't send exam results to applicants – they come from the exam board, either via their school, by post, or online.

UCAS sends some results on to universities or colleges, but not all of them. Check if your child needs to send any of their results to their firm and insurance choices. If they do, they'll need to do this as soon as the results are available. You can check which results UCAS receives at **ucas.com/sending-exam-results**.

Try to be there when they get their exam results, so you can share in their excitement, or give them that extra bit of support if things don't go as planned.

It's strongly recommended that your child is in the country for results day, so avoid booking any holidays around that week in August. This way, should they need to speak to someone about their results or options on the day, they can do so. You might want to be around, too!

What if there's really good news?

Adjustment

If your child's results are better than expected, they might meet and exceed the conditions of their firm choice. In this situation, they may wish to look at Adjustment to find an alternative course.

Adjustment is available between 13 and 31 August 2020, but applicants only have five days to use it, from the moment their firm choice confirms their place, or from 13 August, whichever is later.

If they don't find an alternative course they like, they will keep the original place they gained on results day. For more information, go to **ucas.com/adjustment**.

What if they don't get the grades they were expecting?

- The university might still accept them, but there's no guarantee.
- They might offer your child a place on another course, or for a different year of entry.
- Your child could use Clearing, or reconsider their options.

Clearing

Clearing is a chance for students to look for a place if they don't have one after they get their exam results. It's also the final chance for universities to fill any places they still have available.

To look for a Clearing place, your child must be eligible. This means that either:

- they have no offers
- their firm and insurance choices have made them unsuccessful
- they applied after 30 June 2020

If your child only applied for one choice, they will need to pay an additional £5 to apply for a course in Clearing. They can do this in Track.

Clearing officially starts on 6 July 2020. However, students must have all their exam results to be able to use it, so the majority of eligible students will use Clearing in August. To find out more, go to ucas.com/clearing.

FINDING UNIVERSITY ACCOMMODATION

The next big decision is choosing where they're going to live.

If your child has their heart set on university halls, they'll need to do their research and apply early. Places aren't always guaranteed, so it's important to encourage them to think about alternative accommodation which can be equally fun and provide a safe living environment.

University halls

The traditional option for first year students, these are managed by the university and offer a good stepping stone from living at home to living independently.

Private student halls

A second option in some areas is a room in a purpose-built student living complex owned by a private company. Factor in which bills are included, what facilities are onsite, and how far it is from campus.

Private accommodation

A good option for mature students, and those who missed out on halls because they applied late or through Clearing, but it can be a big leap from living at home.

Staying at home

It can work out well for students to continue living at home – as long as you're happy for them to stay! They may need to make more effort to get out and socialise to meet other students, but they'll save money and avoid the hassle of moving.

Questions to ask about university halls

Try to see one or two halls of residence on an open day – you'll probably be taken to the best on offer, but it's a great time to do some fact finding.

Consider the following questions:

- Is a place in halls guaranteed? What accommodation is available off-campus?
- Would a place still be guaranteed if the uni is your child's insurance choice?
- What does it cost, and what's included in that cost?
- Do students have to move in and out each term?
- Are they catered or self-catered?
- How big are the rooms? Are some bigger than others?
- How quiet are they?
- Can you put stuff on the walls?
- How secure is it?
- What happens in years two and three?
- How far will you have to travel to get to uni and town?
- Can you bring a car?
- How close is it to lecture halls, town, etc.?
- Does the university have a dedicated housing service for finding accommodation on and off-campus?

What do they need to pack?

Must-take items

- **Clothes** – don't pack everything! Enough for that term will do.
- **Bedding** – duvet, sheets, pillows, and towels.
- **Bathroom** – toiletries, medication, and a small first aid kit.
- **Laundry** – washing products, laundry bag, and drying rack.
- **Electronics** – laptop, printer, extension leads, and chargers.
- **Kitchen** – cutlery, crockery, glasses, pots, pans, and basic gadgets such as a kettle and toaster, if these won't be provided (check with the accommodation first).
- **Admin** – passport, driving licence, NHS medical card, National Insurance number, and all important correspondences with the university.
- **Food basics** – coffee, tea bags, cereal, cooking oil, tins, and condiments.
- **Some home comforts** – a few special extras reminding them of home can help them settle in.

BILLS, BUDGETING, AND PREPARING FOR UNI

For many students, uni will be the first time they will have budgeted and paid for bills. Start planning now to make sure they know what to do.

Student bills

Council tax – if everyone living in your child's household is a full-time student, they won't have to pay council tax. If someone in their household isn't a full-time student, they'll get a council tax bill, but will qualify for a discount.

Utility bills – if your child is moving into private accommodation, utility bills may not be included, so make sure they're aware of gas, electricity, and water bills.

Internet – probably a priority for your child! Many universities offer a free wireless connection in halls, so make sure they ask if this is included.

TV licence – students need a TV licence if they watch or record television programmes as they're being shown on TV, on any device. They don't need one to use a streaming service, such as Amazon Prime or Netflix, but a subscription may be required.

Insurance – check the small print of your home contents insurance, which may already cover your child's belongings when away from home, or see if this could be added on to your existing policy. If not, it may be worth getting them a separate policy.

Budgets and bank accounts

By now, you and your child should have a good idea of their budget per term. Give them some tips for cutting their living costs, and the tools to stay within their budget – a simple weekly expenditure spreadsheet could work wonders here!

Opening a student bank account before they head off is also a good idea, so they can take their time over comparing what's on offer. UCAS will send your child a status code in their newsletters, which can be used as proof of their status as a future student, to make the process of opening a student account quick and easy.

Banks are keen to entice students with freebies, but do look beyond student railcard or voucher incentives. It's often features such as the level of interest-free overdraft that may prove more essential. When you're comparing 0% overdraft facilities on offer, check whether the headline amount is guaranteed, or just 'up to', and if there are any other restrictions.

Teach them some independence

Spare your child some domestic disasters (and yourself some frantic messages or phone calls) by teaching them some simple recipes, how to do laundry without turning everything pink, and handy extras, like how to sew a button back on.

Encourage your child to see an overdraft as a helpful buffer rather than extra cash, and to always stick within their authorised limit to avoid hefty charges. Likewise, warn them of the pitfalls of high interest sources of credit, such as payday loans and credit cards.

Prepare yourself too!

It's not all about them! This is a big change for you as well. Talk to other parents, carers, or guardians whose homes are also a bit quieter since their children have left for university.

Think about what you'd like to do with your extra time – perhaps taking up a hobby or spending more time with friends and other family members.

The end of their first term will come around before you know it...

USEFUL RESOURCES TO HELP YOU

There are many ways you can get help from UCAS.

UCAS

- **Sign up for our parent newsletters** for all the information you need to support your child each step of the way.
- Watch video guides and read parent blogs – covering funding and finance, the application process, open days, and much more.
- Visit **ucas.com/parents** for handy resources and top tips.

You can call UCAS on **0371 468 0 468**, Monday to Friday, 08:30 – 18:00 (UK time),

or drop us a question on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, or **Instagram**.

If your child currently lives outside the UK, you might find UCAS' 'Applying to study in the UK' guides a useful read. You can download them at **ucas.com/internationalguides**.

Other helpful links

Careers advice:

- National Careers Service for England
- Careers Service Northern Ireland
- Skills Development Scotland
- Careers Wales
- Conservatoires UK
- Get Into Teaching

Students with disabilities:

- Disability Rights UK
- Disabled Students' Allowances
- ucas.com/disabled-students

Gap years:

- The Year Out Group
- ucas.com/gap-year

General higher education advice:

- National Union of Students

Advice for care leavers:

- Propel
- NNECL
- ucas.com/care-leavers

Student mental health and wellbeing:

- Young Minds
- Charlie Waller Memorial Trust
- Student Minds