PARENT, GUARDIAN AND CARER GUIDE 2024

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

UCAS

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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 has produced 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 2024, 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**

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 to bear in mind.

KEY DATES AT A GLANCE

2023

- **2 May**: Courses starting in 2024 are available in the UCAS search tool.
- **16 May**: UCAS Undergraduate application live for registrations for 2024 entry courses. Your child can start their application but cannot submit it to UCAS until September.
- **12 July**: Conservatoire applications open for 2024 entry. From this date, applicants can register, pay, and send their applications.
- **5 September**: Completed UCAS Undergraduate 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.
- **2 October**: Application deadline for conservatoire music applications. Applications for dance, drama, and musical theatre courses may have a different deadline – check conservatoires' websites for information.
- **16 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.

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.

2024

- **31 January (18:00 UK time)**: Deadline for most undergraduate courses and most conservatoire undergraduate dance, drama, or musical theatre courses. An application can still be sent after this date, but the providers concerned cannot guarantee they'll give it equal consideration.
- **28 February**: Extra opens.
- **30 June (18:00 UK time)**: Last date for receipt of applications with choices. Applications received after this deadline are automatically entered into Clearing.
- **4 July**: Extra closes.
- **5 July**: Clearing opens, and vacancies are shown in the UCAS search tool.

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

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 the 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, such as a bank 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 living during term time 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 £9,978 per year could be available per year depending on your household income. If you're earning more than the threshold, the loan amount your child is eligible for will be lower, meaning they or you will need to make up any financial shortfall.

Extra support

Maintenance Grants are no longer available for new students, 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' Allowance (DSA)** – 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. Students can get up to £26,291 of support for 2023 to 2024. There are exceptions for students who need more money for travel costs. This will apply for both new and continuing students. How much they get depends on their individual needs, not your household income. DSA 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').

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

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

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 – but don't send this unless you are asked to, as it could delay your child's application. 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.

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 £27,295 a year, £2,274 a month and £524 a week for English and Welsh undergraduate students (£27,660 for Scottish and £22,015 for 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 40 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.

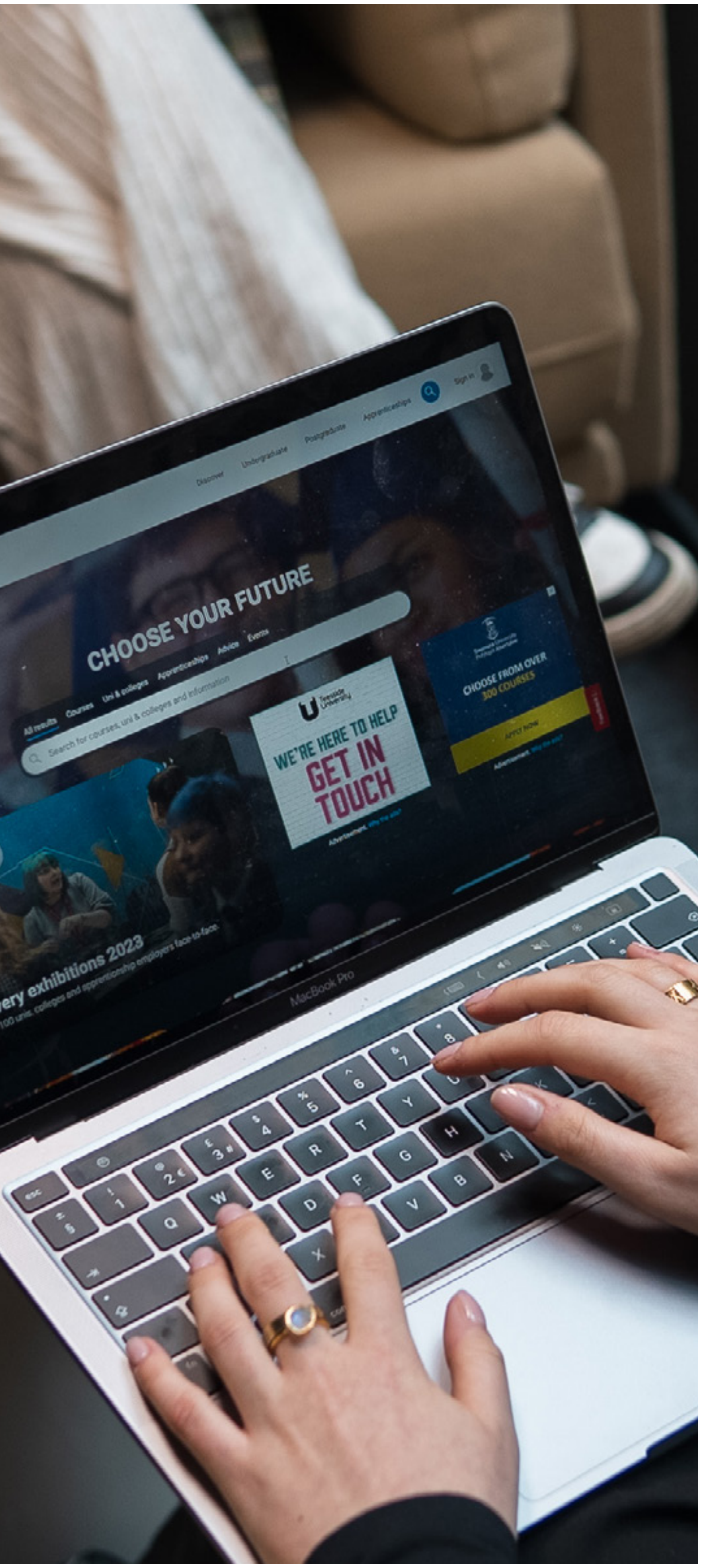
The Student Loans Company's guidance – **www.gov.uk/repaying-your-student-loan** – has more information about how they'll repay their student loan, how much they'll repay, and the interest involved.

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.
- **UCAS' Careers Quiz**
  By answering questions about their interests, personality and plans, students as young as 11 can now receive personalised career matches along with a list of courses that previous students studied to get there.

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, T Levels, 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.

> 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.

ALL ABOUT APPRENTICESHIPS

If your child isn't sure about a traditional degree, or learns better in a hands-on way, an apprenticeship is a great option to get practical industry experience while being paid and earning qualifications.

What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a paid job, with formal training. Apprentices are an employee of a company, so they're paid a salary and entitled to all the same rights as other employees. They are paid at least the relevant national minimum wage, but the average apprentice wage is often higher than the minimum hourly rate required by the Government.

Parent and guardian guide to apprenticeships

In our guide we share what you need to know and practical tips for supporting someone who might be thinking about an apprenticeship.
www.ucas.com/apprenticeships/parent-and-guardian-guide-apprenticeships

How does an apprenticeship work?

Apprentices spend most of their time working, and the rest of their time studying at a college or uni. They have protected time as part of their contract that must be used for studying. This is called 'off the job training' and is delivered by subject experts. It can include classroom learning, work shadowing, and mentoring time to research and write assignments depending on the apprenticeship.

Need to knows

- There are different levels of apprenticeships depending on where you are in the UK.
- Each apprenticeship will have different entry requirements and offer a different salary.
- There is no specific start date for apprenticeships. They come up as and when throughout the year.

Benefits of an apprenticeship

- An apprentice is treated the same as an employee, gets a salary, and is entitled to a holiday allowance and sick pay.
- An apprentice doesn't pay any study costs, even if they are studying for a degree. The costs are funded by the employer and the Government.
- An apprenticeship is a great way to gain professional experience. Apprentices are very employable as they already have lots of industry experience.

How to apply for apprenticeships

Applying for an apprenticeship is like applying for a job. Applicants will need:

- **an up-to-date CV** – including any academic achievements, work experience, volunteering or internships. If your child is still at school, filling a CV with any transferrable skills like sports teams and part-time jobs can demonstrate relevant skills.
- **a cover letter** –explaining why they are interested in the apprenticeship, why they would be a good fit and why they want to work for the company. Do a bespoke letter for each application.

You can find more information at **www.ucas.com/careers-advice**

TIP If your child is doing a personal statement for university, this can be a good basis for an apprenticeship application. You may want to encourage them to apply for both traditional degrees and apprenticeships to keep their options open.

For more detailed information, visit: **www.ucas.com/apprenticeships**

OTHER ALTERNATIVES TO UNIVERSITY

Going to uni or doing an apprenticeship isn't right for everybody. When researching post-16 plans, it's important your child weighs up all their options to make the right decision for them in the long-term.

The world of work

Some people might want to get straight into the world of work and climb their way up the career ladder.

Get them to develop their CV, research job vacancies, and speak with recruiters to get a sense of different industries, including school leaver programmes, that can help with their long-term career aspirations.

Sign up to apprenticeship search

If your child thinks a job or an apprenticeship could be right for them, they can create an account to:

- search for jobs and apprenticeships
- filter by subject area, role type, location, and more
- shortlist jobs and sign up for job alerts

Gap years

Your child may want to take some time out before taking their next steps, whether that be going to uni, doing an apprenticeship, or something else entirely.

A gap year is a chance to work and build up some money, do an internship or volunteering, or go travelling, for example.

The UCAS Hub is packed with all the information and tools your child needs to explore their options in one place. From considering apprenticeships, to choosing their future career and writing a stand-out CV. Visit ucas.com/hub to find out more.

How to support someone who isn't sure about university

As a parent, you should focus on providing all the support and reassurance you can. Make sure you're there to listen; it's the most important thing you can do.

- **Be positive and supportive:** Remember, there's no need to rush into a decision. It's okay to take a step back and figure it all out. Give reassurance and stay positive.
- **Get clued up:** Learning about the path your child is interested in can help them have confidence in their next steps. Take a look at ucas.com for more information and advice about all the different routes they could take.
- **Help them explore:** Helping your child make their next steps is all about finding the right path for them. Help them explore all the options, including apprenticeships, jobs, and more. You might want to encourage them to do a UCAS application too, so they can keep their options open.
- **Help them prepare:** Help with their CV, cover letter, and any interview prep. You might want to encourage them to find a part-time job, work experience, volunteering, or an internship, to make their application stand out.

For more careers advice, visit: www.ucas.com/careers-advice

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 approximately 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.

- Get your child to register for their UCAS Hub to start exploring their options, favouriting subjects, and using our handy tools – all in one place.
- 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 – Attend UCAS Discovery events and open days

- UCAS Discovery events give students the chance to meet hundreds of universities, colleges, and employers, and chat face-to-face with current students and apprentices – all in one place. They'll also be able to attend live Q&A talks with subject and industry experts, and get the latest advice and information on applications and career choices to help them narrow down their options after school or college. Go to ucas.com/exhibitions to learn more and book free tickets for your nearest 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

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.

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 in the UCAS Hub – 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.

Before they start their application, get them to read our advice www.ucas.com/fillinginyourapplication.

- **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.
- **Contact and residency details** – address, email, telephone number, postal address, and if they want someone else to be able to act on their behalf.
- **Nationality details** – their birthplace and nationality.
- **Supporting information** – these questions ask if they've lived or worked – or have parents from – the EU, EEA or Switzerland.
- **English language skills** – if English is not their first language, they can give details of IELTS or TOEFL English proficiency tests. (This is not passed on to their choices.)
- **Finance and funding** – how they will fund their studies.
- **Diversity and inclusion (UK applicants only)** – equality monitoring information. Providers only see this information after a place is secured or at the end of the application cycle – so it doesn't influence any decision-making.
- **More about you** – gives the opportunity to highlight their individual circumstances in the application. Universities and colleges can make more informed decisions about an applicant's circumstances and ensure supportive measures are in place for them.
- **Education** – details and dates of all schools they've attended since the age of 11, exam results, and exams still to be taken.
- **Employment** – basic details of any any full or part-time paid employment. They can talk more about this in their personal statement.
- **Extra activities (UK applicants only)** – if they've participated in an activity to prepare them for higher education, they can give details of it here.
- **Personal statement** – their opportunity to tell the university or college about their ambitions, skills and experience, and why they want to study a particular course or subject.

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 £27.50 for up to five choices.

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.

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

TIP In the 'Contact and residency 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.

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!

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 – available in the UCAS Hub.

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.

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 www.ucas.com/writing-your-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.'

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

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.

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.

Both universities and conservatoires offer undergraduate degrees.

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:

- **2 October 2023 (18:00 UK time)** for music courses
- **31 January 2024 (18:00 UK time)** for most dance, drama, and musical theatre courses

There are some exceptions, so check conservatoires' websites and check details of courses in the UCAS search tool.

How to apply for conservatoire courses

Students can apply for courses at conservatoires through UCAS Conservatoires. 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 or Wales, they will need to apply through the UCAS Undergraduate route.

If they already have an undergraduate degree and are based in England, they will need to make their application through the Department for Education's 'Apply for teacher training service' at **www.gov.uk/apply-for-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.

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:

16 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.

31 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 your application 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 change your mind and no longer want your firm choice, you can use the 'decline my place' button in your application to use Clearing to find another place.

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 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 their application.

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 straightaway 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 their application. 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, their application 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 from their application within 14 days of the date on their welcome email.

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

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 their application 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...
1 May 2024 (date to be confirmed)	29 May 2024 (date to be confirmed) (unless they're using Extra to find a place)
17 July 2024	24 July 2024

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. 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 28 February 2024 and ends on 4 July 2024.

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 all their other options at ucas.com/what-can-i-do-next.

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 feels 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 their application.

There is restricted access to applications in the lead up to SQA results day and A level results day, while UCAS processes results – details of when applications are affected 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 time. This way, should they need to speak to someone about their results or options on the day, they can do so.

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 or they change their mind and no longer want their firm choice.

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 2024
- they've declined their firm place using the 'decline my place' button in their application

There is no additional application fee to use Clearing.

Clearing officially starts on 5 July 2024. 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.

Finding somewhere they'll be happy to live is an important consideration for your child when choosing where to study. Use **UCAS' accommodation search** to find both uni and private student accommodation, and help them make the right choice.

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.

Support with the cost of living: We have tip, tools, and resources from trusted sources to support you and your child on their journey to higher education at **ucas.com/cost-of-living**.

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.
- 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, or Twitter.

Follow us on Instagram and TikTok to keep up-to-date with everything we're doing.

UCAS information and advice

The UCAS Hub is designed to help your child explore all their post-18 options in one central place, but on **ucas.com** we also offer a range of information and advice about apprenticeships, taking a gap year, and going into employment, as well as resources to support students exploring and applying to higher education.

Here is a quick guide to the information, advice, and resources on ucas.com.

Tools to help your child get started

- Careers Quiz
- UCAS' search tool
- Subject guides
- City guides
- Discover hub
- The Ultimate Guides
- Apprenticeship search

Higher education

- Open days and events
- Choosing what to study
- Choosing where to study
- Entry requirements
- Personal statement
- Search for courses
- International and EU students
- Applying to university
- Interviews and auditions
- Student fees and finance
- Support with the cost of living
- Accommodation
- Accommodation search
- Preparing to start
- Study at a conservatoire

Students with individual support needs

- Disabled students
- Support for disabled people taking apprenticeships
- Estranged students
- Students with caring responsibilities
- Students with parenting responsibilities
- Care experienced students
- Mental health and wellbeing support
- Refugees, asylum seekers and students with limited leave to remain
- Students from UK Armed Forces backgrounds
- UK Armed Forces Veterans and Service Leavers

Apprenticeships

- Apprenticeships
- Apprenticeships in England
- Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland
- Apprenticeships in Scotland
- Apprenticeships in Wales
- Apprenticeship search
- Industry guides
- Apprenticeship case studies
- Browse apprenticeship employers
- Applying for an apprenticeship

Gap years

- Gap years

Going to work

- How to get into work
- What are employers looking for?
- Tips on finding career ideas
- Internships
- Explore jobs and careers
- Is work experience important?
- Applying for jobs – tips
- How to write a CV
- Working for yourself – self-employment and starting a business
- How you get paid at work

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