Parents’ and supporters’ guide to...
Understanding university offers

Once your child has applied to university via the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) (see Applying to University fact sheet for more information), the university will update UCAS Track with their decision on whether to offer your child a place. There are three types of responses that might be given by the universities:

1. Conditional offer
This offer is based upon the student attaining the entry requirements set by the university for a specific course. It will give the student a goal to work towards and you can encourage them in achieving these grades.

2. Unconditional offer
If the student has already achieved the necessary academic grades to meet the entry requirements for the course, they will receive an unconditional offer. This means that if the offer is accepted, this is the course and university where the student will study.

3. Unsuccessful
Unfortunately, this means that the student has not met or is not expected to meet the entry requirements for the specified course. The university may provide feedback at this stage, or it might be worth contacting the admissions office at the university to find out why they have made this decision.

If each of the five chosen universities gives an unsuccessful response or the student declines the offers they have received, UCAS Extra is available. This is free to use and will allow the student to apply to one course at a time until they have received an offer they are happy with. UCAS Extra closes on the 4 July 2021.

UCAS Track
UCAS Track is accessed by logging in to UCAS and gives the student an overview of their status with each of their chosen universities.

Once all of the universities have given their responses, the student needs to decide on a firm and insurance choice, essentially narrowing down from five choices to two. The firm choice is the preferred university and, if the student achieves the grades specified in the offer, this is where they will go to study. The insurance choice is the back-up and the prerequisite grades are normally lower than the firm choice.

Universities have a set date by which they need to make a decision on your child’s application, which varies depending on when the application is received. Students then need to reply by a certain date which is again, based on when they have received all of their decisions from UCAS.

If your child is unsure about making their firm and insurance choices, it may be worth revisiting the reasons why they chose that course/university in the first place and they may wish to visit or contact the university to gain further insight.