

Parents' and supporters' guide to...

Applying to university

If your child has decided to go to university, they will need to apply via the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). The deadline to apply to most courses is 15 January, but usually their school or college will have an internal deadline that needs to be met. This fact sheet will provide you with the information you need to help support your aspiring student with their UCAS application.

Step 1: Register

Your future graduate will firstly need to register for an account with UCAS by visiting the UCAS website. Here, they will be asked to set a username and password.

Step 2: Log in

Once registered, your child can log in to their account and complete additional personal details: email address, residential status, special needs or impairments. Names must be entered exactly as they appear on official documentation such as a passport or birth certificate. This is also the section where you can be nominated as a contact person, giving UCAS and the chosen universities permission to discuss the application with you.

Step 3: Additional information (for UK applicants only)

This section has both mandatory and optional components and is used to monitor applications and to collate data. It is not used in the decision making process and is shared with universities once a place is secured or at the end of the application cycle.

Step 4: Student finance (UK and EU applicants only)

This section will only appear if your child has stated that they are a UK or EU resident in section 2. UCAS do not deal with student finance directly.

Step 5: Course choices

Up to five courses can be chosen when applying through UCAS. These can be multiple choices at one institution, or different courses at five different institutions. The courses are not entered in order of preference and the full list can only be viewed by each university once a decision is made.

Applications to medicine, dentistry, veterinary science/medicine can only be made to a maximum of four courses. A fifth choice can be made but it cannot be one of the aforementioned. The deadline to apply for these courses is the 15 October.

If applying to Oxford or Cambridge, usually only one application can be made although there are exceptions. The deadline is the 15 October.

Step 6: Full education history

This is where your future graduate will be asked for their qualifications from secondary education onwards. If currently studying for a qualification or awaiting results, their referee will add the predicted grades to the application. It is really important that the qualifications are entered accurately and if unsure of the correct title of a qualification, please ask their school for clarification. It is also important to include all academic related study, for example, music theory or dance certificates taken.



Step 7: Employment history

As the name suggests this is the section where any paid employment can be recorded. Up to five jobs can be listed and is useful for universities to read as it helps to build an overall picture of the applicant.

Step 8: Writing their personal statement

A chance to show universities why the course is of interest and what it is that makes your child a great student. There is a limit of 4,000 characters or 47 lines. You can support your child by proof reading their personal statement for any grammatical mistakes and ensuring that what they write is relevant to the course for which they are applying.

An important note: plagiarising a personal statement is taken seriously, so please encourage your child to make sure their personal statement is original and their own work.

Step 9: Checking the details

Time to check the form and make any necessary edits and then mark the sections as complete and save. You can support your child by reading through their application to make sure they haven't missed anything. Once this has been completed, they will need to read and agree to the declaration which allows UCAS to process their information and send it to the universities they have chosen.

Step 10: References, paying the application fee and sending the application to UCAS

In school or college, your future graduate will be allocated a personal tutor, advisor or teacher who knows them academically, who will be asked to write a reference for them. Every application must include a reference and therefore this section needs to be completed by the allocated person before it is sent to UCAS.

Once the reference is done, the application fee needs to be paid which is currently £18 for applying to one course or £24 for multiple courses.

Once all of these steps have been finished and the application has been submitted to UCAS, it will be distributed to the universities listed on the application form. UCAS Track should be regularly checked as this is where the universities' decision or request for an interview will be shown.

The UCAS application process is logical to follow and should not raise too many questions, but if it does then call UCAS or consult their website for advice.