

The UCAS process

UCAS – an independent charity

UCAS does:

- ✓ process applications
- ✓ provide information, advice, and training
- ✓ have a Fraud and Verification Team
- ✓ take part in education sector engagement

UCAS doesn't:

- ✗ suggest courses or universities
- ✗ make decisions or offers
- ✗ advise on finance, immigration, or visas for individuals

What is UCAS?

350+ universities and colleges:

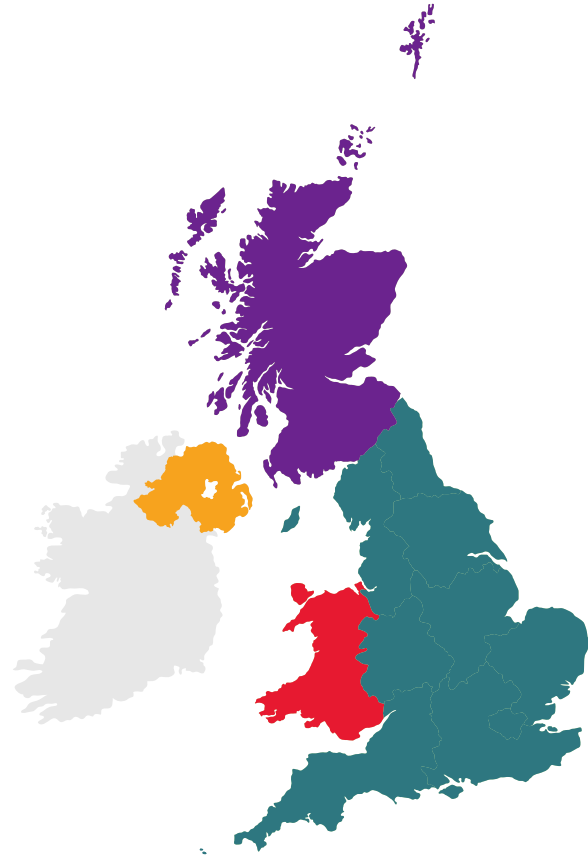
4 in Northern Ireland

15 in Wales

18 in Scotland

316 in England

35,000+ courses available



Choices available



Higher
education



Apprenticeships/
traineeships



Studying
abroad



Gap year



Getting a job

Find out more: ucas.com

Apprenticeship advice

UCAS has [apprenticeship advice](#) to help students make informed decisions about their post-16 and post-18 opportunities.

Find out about:

- the different types of apprenticeships
- how to find and apply for apprenticeships
- preparing for the application and interview process

Head to:

ucas.com/apprenticeships

Why higher education?

Opportunities while studying:

- Chance to study a subject they are passionate about.
- Achieve a qualification that could lead to their chosen career.
- Grow in confidence, make lifelong friends, and gain independence and important life skills that will widen their prospects.

With a degree, they'll have:

- the opportunity to follow their career path
- better job prospects, as many employers target graduates
- higher earning potential

Choosing the right university

- **Style** – from the traditional, with a focus on subject-based courses and research, to modern universities, with a greater focus on vocational courses.
- **Location** – some are based in large cities, others in smaller towns - a major influence on the environment and lifestyle.
- **Size** – larger universities can have more than 20,000 students, whereas some of the smallest have only a few thousand.
- **Culture and facilities** – influenced by a range of factors, including the diversity of students who attend.
- **What graduates do** – all universities collect destination statistics. It can be interesting to find out the types of jobs or further study students go on to.
- **Tuition fees** – can vary between course providers. Check if there are any scholarships or bursaries available.
- **Living costs** – accommodation, transport, and food can vary enormously.

Choosing the right course

- What does the course cover?
- Courses with the same title may be very different.
- Look carefully at the core course content, and the range of optional studies/modules available.
- Which modules are the most interesting and relevant to career aspirations?
- See if the course or university/college offers any internship, placement, or study abroad opportunities.
- How is the course taught – structured teaching, or more independent research? How many lectures are there, and how much group work will be done in seminars?
- How is the course assessed?

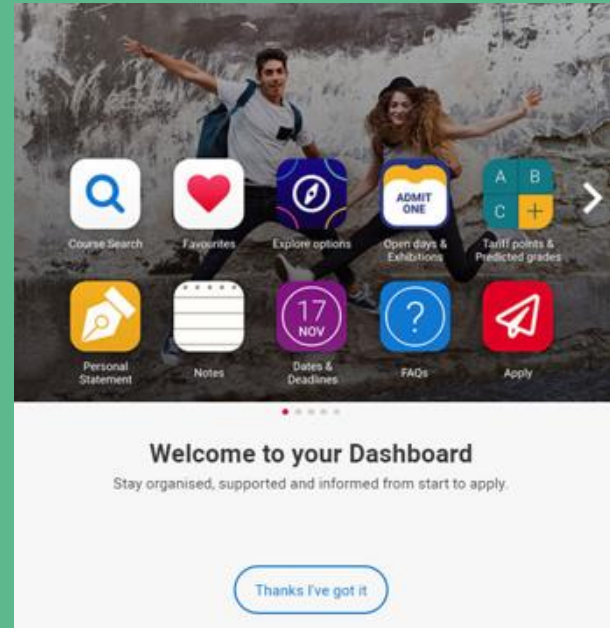
Research resources



Starting research

Students should register in UCAS Hub to:

- explore careers, subjects, universities and apprenticeships
- find and favourite over 35,000 courses
- search for virtual tours and online events
- turn predicted grades into Tariff points
- speak to those in the know using [Unibuddy](#)
- speak to career, higher education, and application specialists by attending the [Hub lives](#).
- explore [job profiles](#) to discover different career roles and pathways



Organise everything in one place...

Get organised:

Tools to search, favourite, shortlist, reflect, diary, and build application.

Define what's important:

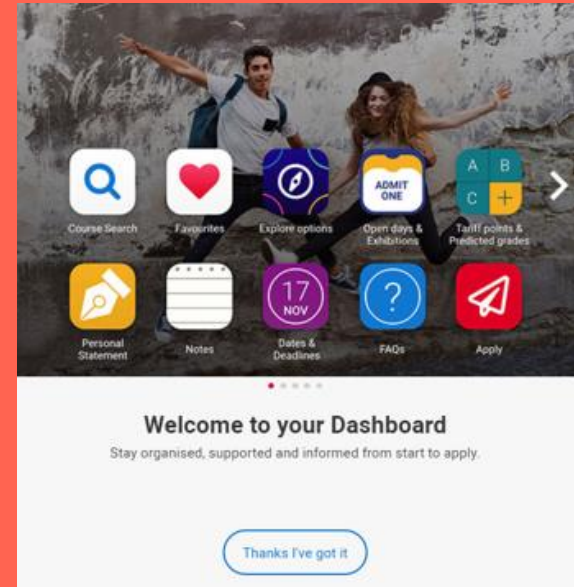
Distance from home, teaching satisfaction, work experience options, job outcomes...

Make it yours:

Organise tools, remove the ones they don't need, and tick off their to do list. It's their space, and their future.

Expanding horizons...

...by pushing options they might not have considered.



Free tools to help...



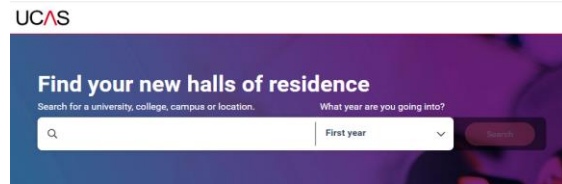
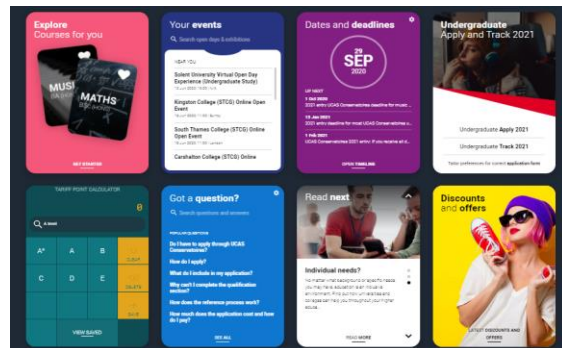
[Discovery Days](#) - at UCAS/Discovery you can explore all kinds of possibilities. Talk to subject and admissions experts, discover apprenticeships, get advice on personal statements, applying through UCAS, and more. Get stuck in and open your mind to a world of opportunities.



[Join our UCAS Hub lives and Facebook lives](#) -each live session is hosted by an expert panel to give you what you need to make an informed decision.



[Accommodation Search](#) - accommodation is high on the list when considering where you want to study, but it's not always easy to compare what's on offer. Understand what options there are using our new Accommodation search.

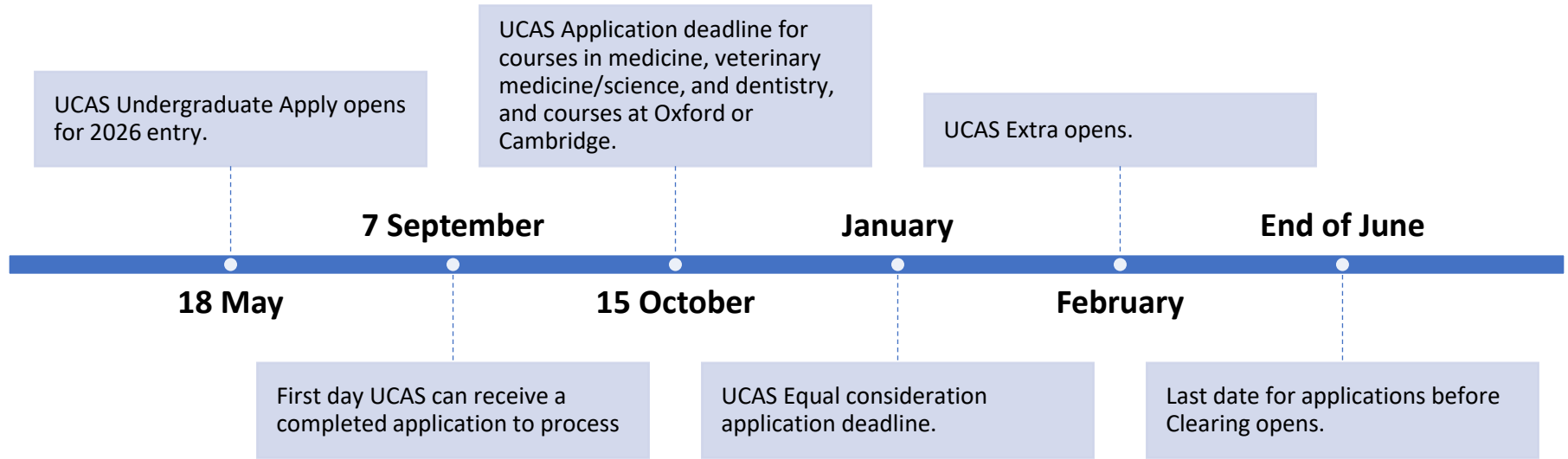


How to find the right student accommodation for you

This is it. Life is good. You're going to uni. Is it going to be the party paradise of on-campus halls, or a flat-share right in the middle of town? Maybe the cost of rent will decide, what supports on hand, or whether there's a bus stop...

[read more](#)

When to apply for 2026 entry

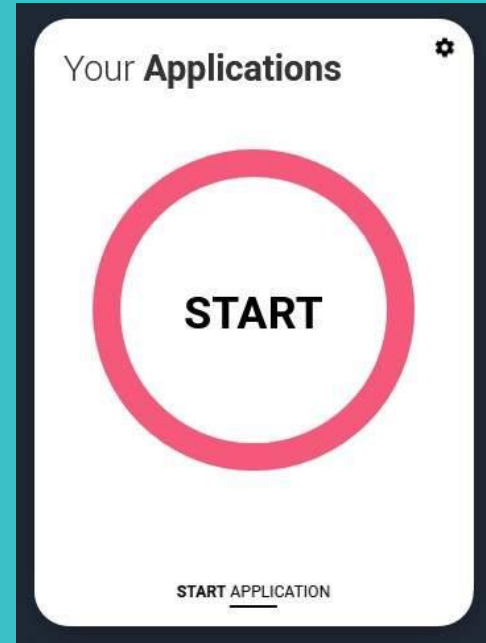


Applying - key facts

- Register with UCAS via the Hub
- Use your username and password to apply online
- Students can add up to 5 choices, unless they're applying to study medicine, veterinary, medicine/science, dentistry – then it's 4 choices plus one other
- Students cannot apply to BOTH Oxford and Cambridge
- Applying costs £28.95
- Once sent universities cannot see other choices when you apply

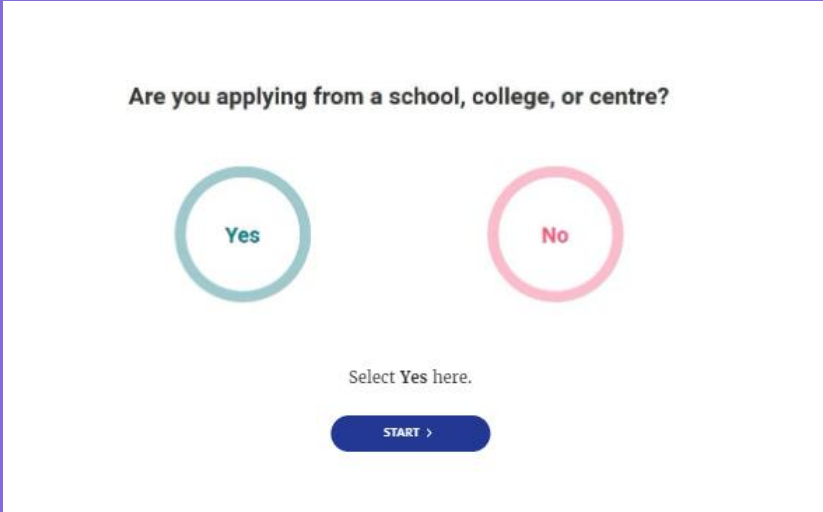
Registering

- To start an application students need a UCAS Hub account.
- Register for a UCAS Hub account at any time
- You'll see a new 'Your applications' tile in your UCAS Hub
- Click 'Start application' to get started...



Linking to a school

- If they're applying with the help of a school, college or centre they should enter their 'buzzword' to link their application.
- The buzzword is a unique code for our centre.
- By linking their application students are giving us permission to view and track their application.
- It also means we can provide a reference.



The screenshot shows a white rectangular form area centered on a purple background. At the top of the form, the question "Are you applying from a school, college, or centre?" is displayed in a bold, black font. Below the question are two circular buttons: a teal one labeled "Yes" and a pink one labeled "No". Underneath these buttons, the text "Select Yes here." is visible. At the bottom of the form is a dark blue button with the text "START >" in white. The entire form is framed by a thick purple border.

Making an application

Sections to be completed:

- Personal details
- Contact and residency details
- Work experience
- Education
- Nationality details
- English language skills
- Supporting information
- Personal statement
- Choices – make up to five
- References
- Finance and funding
- Diversity and inclusion (for students with a UK home address)

The screenshot displays the UCAS Application portal for a 2020 Undergraduate applicant. The top navigation bar includes links for Further education, Undergraduate, Postgraduate, International, and Careers, along with a user profile icon. The main heading is 'UCAS APPLICATION' with a progress indicator showing 33% completion. Below this, the 'My profile' section is visible, containing a grid of application sections:

- Profile overview**: Before starting your application, including links for completing the application, applying through a school/college, applying as an individual, and checking for supporting information.
- Personal details**: Name, age, date of birth, and gender. Status: Section complete.
- Contact and residency details**: Address, email, telephone, and other contact info. Status: Section complete.
- Work experience**: Employment past, unpaid, or volunteer work. Status: Section in progress.
- Education**: Qualifications and periods of study. Status: Start this section.
- Nationality details**: Employment and nationalities. Status: Start this section.
- Supporting information**: Documents that provide extra info to support your application. Status: Start this section.
- English language skills**: Is English your first language? Status: Start this section.
- Finance and funding**: Tell us how you'll fund your study. Status: Section complete.
- Diversity and inclusion**: Only shared with a partner if you have a partner or your application is a referral. Status: Start this section.

Below the 'My profile' section is the 'Application questions' area, which includes:

- Personal statement**: Why do you want to study this subject? Status: Section in progress.
- Choices**: Choose details. Status: Section complete.
- Reference**: Provide details of your referees. Status: Start this section.

The personal statement



The only section students have full control over



Students only chance to market themselves individually



The same for all choices



A maximum of 4,000 characters, or 47 lines



A minimum of 1,000 characters



There isn't a spelling or grammar check



No formatting is allowed

UCAS' similarity detection service:
every personal statement is run through software to check for plagiarism.

Completing the UCAS application



Students register for a UCAS Hub account



Student complete their application – working their way through all sections and send it to their school / college



Teachers/advisers review the application and add reference and predicted grades



Applications are sent to UCAS by the school on behalf of the student



Universities/ colleges make their decisions

Tracking applications

Students should head to ucas.com to track their application. Click your application to:

- follow the progress of their application 24/7
- see their choices and personal information
- view their offers
- reply to offers online

In Track, a student can hold up to two offers:

- **firm** – if they meet the conditions of the offer they will be placed here
- **insurance** – if they are not placed with their firm choice, they may be placed with their insurance choice.



Decisions

Universities and colleges will review the:



personal statement



qualifications



reference

They may also ask for:



admissions test



interview



portfolio/audition

Replies to offers

Once students have decisions from all their choices, they can hold a maximum of two offers:

- one as a 'firm' acceptance – their first choice
- the other as an 'insurance' acceptance. This acts as a back-up if they don't get into their 'firm' choice

They must then decline any remaining offers.

Once all decisions and replies have been made, if students aren't holding an offer, they may be able to use Extra or Clearing to find available places.





Other options



Extra (Feb – Jul)

- Used all five choices and had no offers.
- Add Extra choices for consideration one at a time in Track.

Clearing (Jul – Oct)

- Apply after 30 June, receive no offers, decline all offers, not met conditions.
- Find vacancies from early July, and add a Clearing choice to their application.

What should students be doing now?

- research
- extracurricular activities
- work experience
- go beyond the syllabus
- focus on this year's studies



How can you support them?

Research

Use the parents/guardians' section of the UCAS website at www.ucas.com/parents.

Sign up

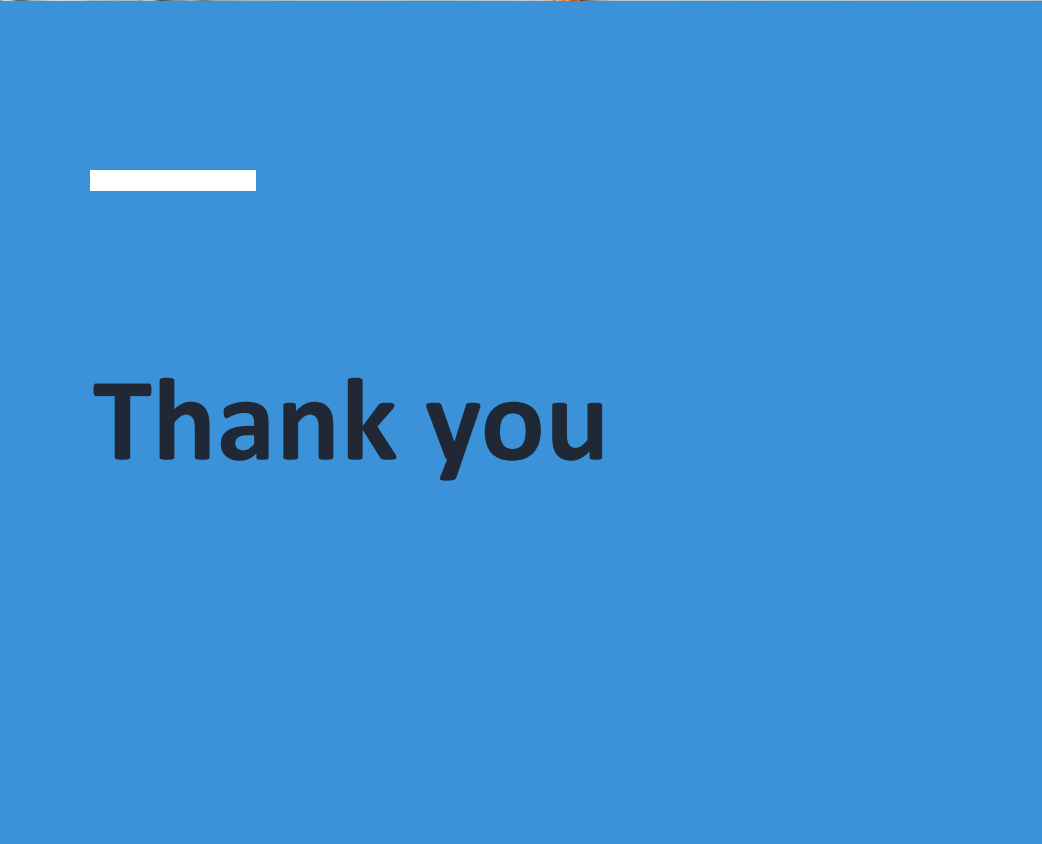
Sign up for parent updates from UCAS and get everything you need to know about the application process direct to your inbox.

Open days

Attend virtual events and open days – you may have a different perspective.

Be proactive

Make sure they read everything carefully that is sent to them and don't book holidays at key times!



Thank you