



**HIGHER
EDUCATION
THE NEXT STAGE?**

Parents' Guide

2017 entry

This guide aims to provide you with an overview of useful information for Higher Education. UCAS provide some excellent, not to be missed resources for parents and students which can be downloaded at

- <https://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/ucas-parent-guide-2017-v2.pdf>
- <https://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/little-guide-2017.pdf>
- https://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/ucas_hints_and_tips_leaflet_webpdf.pdf

There is also a direct link to UCAS from the school website.

The Courses:

1. Degrees:

- Usually lasts three years or four for sandwich degrees
- Normally requires a minimum of 2 A levels or equivalent and another 3 subjects at GCSE but entry requirements are usually much higher than the minimum
- An 'A' grade at 'A' level or Distinction in a BTEC National Award is worth 48 points, a 'C' grade at 'A' level or Merit in a BTEC National Award is 32 points and so on
- Courses can be vocational e.g. engineering or non- vocational e.g. philosophy
- Degrees can be:
 - **single** honours concentrating on one subject
 - **joint** honours – mainly studying 2 or 3 subjects
 - **modular** where a degree programme can be 'built' up from across a number of core and subsidiary subjects
 - **sandwich** studying a subject and combining this with a placement in industry

2. Foundation Degrees:

- Usually lasts 2 years and are equivalent to the first 2 years of an honours degree
- Introduced originally to replace the Higher National Diploma
- These should combine academic and work based learning and be delivered in combination with employers
- Usually have flexible study methods, part-time, distance learning etc and also more flexible entry requirements
- Offered in vocational subjects
- Usually delivered at Colleges of Higher Education in partnership with an awarding University
- Can be possible to enter the final year of a degree after satisfactory completion of the Foundation Degree. The Honours degree year is usually delivered at the partner University

3. Higher National Diploma (HND)

- Usually lasts 2 years or 3 years for a sandwich course
- They are equivalent to the first 2 years of a degree
- Normally requires 1 A level pass with another A level studied
- Tend to have more taught hours and more coursework
- These are the original vocational tertiary level
- These have a vocational emphasis but do not necessarily involve actual work based learning
- Usually offered at Colleges of Higher Education
- It is sometimes possible to transfer onto a suitable honours degree after the satisfactory completion of an HND but this is not always straight forward and might require entering the degree in the 2nd year rather than the 3rd year

4. BTEC Foundation Diploma in Art and Design

- This was devised to allow students some extra time to develop their skills and interests before applying to University
- Usually offered at Colleges although they can be offered at Universities
- Normally requires an 'A' level in Art and Design and a portfolio of work
- Although an A level is often required for entrance, this is actually classed as a level 3 FE course

The prestigious universities/departments which receive more applications than places will continue to use 'A' levels as the basis for offers. They will require particular grades for 3 'A' levels. Many will require a fourth subject at AS and will stipulate a pass or even a particular grade. They will often name acceptable 'A' level subjects. There will be more emphasis on GCSE results as A Level reform occurs and examinations are linear.

For example:

To study Physiotherapy (BSC) at X University the required grades are AAB with an A in Biology or PE.

To study Physiotherapy at Y University the required grades are ABB at A2 level and at AS level including Biology and one other Science.

The other universities with lower rankings will use the points system and will be flexible, allowing students to accumulate points from their AS and 'A' levels.

A Typical University:

- There is no such thing as a typical university. The major variations are as follows:
 - The entry requirements
 - The size
 - The location
 - The style of teaching
 - The length of terms
 - The type of courses offered
 - The 'prestige'/rank
 - The employment record
 - The value of the degree
 - The level and quality of work
 - The expectations
 - The mix of state and private school students

- The quality varies from department to department within any university.

The Russell Group of Universities

The Russell Group represents 24 leading universities which are committed to maintaining the highest levels of academic excellence in both teaching and research.

- University of Birmingham
- University of Bristol
- University of Cambridge
- Cardiff University
- Durham University
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Exeter

- University of Glasgow
- Imperial College London
- King's College London
- University of Leeds
- University of Liverpool
- London School of Economics & Political Science
- University of Manchester
- Newcastle University
- University of Nottingham
- University of Oxford
- Queen Mary University London
- Queen's University Belfast
- University of Sheffield
- University of Southampton
- University College London
- University of Warwick
- University of York

Other things to consider

- Campus, non campus or city based? This can make a big difference to the atmosphere and the cost. Campus universities tend to feel friendlier and safer.
- Assessment methods – final exams can be at the end of the 3 years, or at the end of each year or sometimes at the end of each term. The percentage of the degree grade which is based on coursework can also vary.
- Student make up – Ratio of males to females, state to private school educated, mature students to school leavers, international to home students, part-time to full-time, post graduate to undergraduate can all make a difference to atmosphere.
- Entry requirements.
- Quality of teaching.
- Does the institution emphasise teaching or research?
- Quality and reputation of the institution for the subject that you want to study.
- The style of teaching – the mix of large lectures, classroom sized lessons, tutorials and seminars vary a lot.

- The actual content of the degree, degrees with the same subject title can be completely different in content from institute to institute.
- The contacts with business and employment records of past students.
- The size and location and distance from home
- The cost of living in the area.
- The number of applicants for places on average for the course.
- Facilities/clubs and societies.
- Is a formal interview part of the selection procedure?
- Destinations of graduates with your subject.
- Student welfare and support available.

Crucial Questions:

A student needs to consider all these points:

- Do I want to study for another three years or more?
- What course would I like to study?
- Would I like to study a vocational or non vocational course?
- Would I like to study more than one subject?
- What grades am I likely to get?
- What type of environment do I want to live in?
- Would I prefer to stay close to home?
- Do I have enough information to be able to make a choice?
- Will a degree help me in the future?
- What student facilities are important to me?
- How high or low is the graduate employment rate?

Sources of Information:

- Visit Open Days
- Experience a Taster Day/Student Shadowing
- Student Guides – Sixth Form (SF2)
- Prospectuses – Sixth Form (SF2)
- Higher Education Reference Material – Sixth Form (SF2)
- University Websites
- Sixth Form Studies sessions led by university staff on various topics
- Higher Education Conventions
- 1 – 1 Careers guidance meetings from the CEIAG Team
- Mock interviews

Comparing Universities

- Compare the best University and degree courses for free. Investigate course rankings, reviews, fees and open days to help you decide at www.whatuni.com

UCAS Sources of Information:

- Parents can sign up for monthly e-newsletters at www.ucas.com/parentform and receive a copy of the Parent Guide
- Unravel the myths of what a place at University means financially at:
www.gov.uk/unimoney
www.thestudentroom.co.uk/studentfinance
www.gov.uk/student-finance
- Publications are available to assist you with the application process including the UCAS Guide to Getting into university and college which can be found at www.ucas.com
- Watch “How to” video guides at www.ucas.tv for a step by step look at the application process
- Got a question? Visit www.facebook.com/ucasonline and seek expert advice
- “Follow” and tweet the team at www.twitter.com/ucas_online

Unsure where a subject can take you:

- Visit the official graduate website to find out what kind of careers your degree qualifies you for at www.prospects.ac.uk (options with your subject)

Application Procedure:

For the vast majority of degree courses, students can apply to a clearing house called UCAS – Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. We will issue a confirmed UCAS timeline in June 2016. (Depending on UCAS published dates this is subject to change)

1st September 2016	Applications can be sent to UCAS from 1 st September.
3rd October 2016	Final deadline for Oxbridge Applications to Head of Sixth Form.
15th October 2016	Deadline for receipt at UCAS of applications to the universities of Oxford or Cambridge and for all medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and veterinary science courses.
15th October 2016	Ideal date for best reception of applications at universities.
7th November 2016	Final deadline for all other applications to Head of Sixth Form.
15th January 2017	Last date for all applications to reach UCAS.
25th February 2017	UCAS EXTRA opens
24th March 2017	Application deadline for Art & Design courses except those listed with 15 th January deadline.
End of March 2017 (Date TBC)	If UCAS received application by 15 th January, the universities should aim to have sent their decisions by this date (but they can take longer.)
Beginning of May 2017 (Date TBC)	Reply by deadline for offers received before 31 st March 2017.
Beginning of June 2017 (Date TBC)	Reply by deadline for offers received after 31 st March 2017.
30th June 2017	Applications received after this date will be entered into Clearing.
4th July 2017	UCAS Extra closes
Mid July 2017 (Date TBC)	If applied by 30 th June and awaiting a decision, universities need to send their decision by this date if they do not, UCAS make any outstanding choices unsuccessful on their behalf.
Mid July 2017 (Date TBC)	Reply to any offers received by this date.
17th August 2017	'A' level results published and Adjustment opens for registration.
31st August 2017	Adjustment closes on this date.
Late August, early September 2017	Clearing.
20th September 2017	This is the last date applications may be accepted for courses starting in 2017.
End of September 2017 (Date TBC)	The Clearing vacancy search is closed after this date. Applicants should contact universities direct to discuss vacancies. Clearing choices can still be added in Track.
Mid October 2017 (Date TBC)	Last date to add a Clearing choice. This is the last date a university or college can accept an application in Clearing.

Adjustment

If your son/daughter passes their exams with better results than expected and exceeds the requirements of their firm choice, they have the opportunity to reconsider where and what to study. To use Adjustment, a student will need to register in Track.

Clearing

Clearing is a service available between July and September, but for most students it is used after the exam results are published in August. It can help students without a university or college place to find suitable vacancies on higher education courses. If students are flexible and have reasonable exam results, there is still a good chance they will find another course through Clearing.

UCAS/BTEC Points:

GCE A Level	
GRADE	TARIFF POINTS
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

GCE AS Level	
GRADE	TARIFF POINTS
A	20
B	16
C	12
D	10
E	6

BTEC Level 3 Subsidiary Diploma	
GRADE	TARIFF POINTS
D*	56
D	48
M	32
P	16

D = Distinction
M = Merit
P = Pass

EXTENDED PROJECT (STAND ALONE)	
GRADE	TARIFF POINTS
A*	28
A	24
B	20
C	16
D	12
E	8

Admissions Tests:

Some universities and colleges require students to pass an admission test, as well as standard qualifications if they are applying for courses in certain subjects.

***BioMedical Admissions Test (BMAT)**

For entry to medicine, veterinary medicine and related courses.

Graduate Medical School Admissions Test (GAMSAT)

For graduate entry into medicine and dentistry courses.

Health Professions Admissions Test (HPAT)

For entry to certain medical courses at the University of Ulster.

The National Admissions Test for Law (LNAT)

For entry to Law.

***Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) UCL**

For entry to European social and political studies at University College London (UCL).

UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT)

For entry to medical and dental schools.

Oxbridge Admissions Tests:

***English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT)**

For entry to English courses at the University of Oxford.

***History Aptitude Test (HAT)**

For entry to all degrees involving History at the University of Oxford.

***Mathematics Aptitude Test (MAT)**

For entry to Mathematics or Computer Science, or a joint honours degree involving Mathematics at the University of Oxford.

***Physics Aptitude Test (PAT)**

For entry to Physics, or a joint degree involving Physics at the University of Oxford.

***Sixth Term Examination Papers (STEP)**

For entry to Mathematics at the University of Cambridge and University of Warwick.

***Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA Cambridge)**

For entry to Computer Science, Natural Sciences, Engineering and Economics at the University of Cambridge.

***Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA Oxford), formerly known as the PPE Admissions Test**

For entry to Politics & Economics (PPE), Economics and Management (E&M), Experimental Psychology (EP) or Psychology and Philosophy at the University of Oxford.

* These admissions tests can be taken at HUS.

Students intending to take one of these admission tests need to complete a registration form, available in June (Submission deadline TBC).

USEFUL WEBSITES

Careers:

www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

www.careersbox.co.uk

www.prospects.ac.uk

www.bestcourse4me.com

www.plotr.co.uk

Government student finance website:

www.direct.gov.uk/student-finance

Quality of teaching:

www.unistats.direct.gov.uk

University and course profiles:

www.ucas.com

www.push.co.uk

www.aimhigherwm.ac.uk

www.nus.org.uk

www.whatuni.com

www.university.which.co.uk

www.applytouni.com

University League Tables:

www.guardian.co.uk/education/table

www.thetimes.co.uk

www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk

Gap year:

www.volunteermatters.org.uk

www.gapyear.com

www.goabroad.com

www.frontier.ac.uk

www.realgap.co.uk

Finance:

www.slc.co.uk (Student Loans Company)

www.dfes.gov.uk/student-support

www.egas-online.org (Education Grants Advisory)

www.studentmoneynet.co.uk

www.direct.gov.uk

Scholarship Search:

www.scholarship-search.org.uk

National Bureau for Students with Disabilities:

www.skill.org.uk

www.direct.gov.uk You can find out more about student support and Disabled Student Allowances (DSA)

Volunteering:

www.volunteermatters.org.uk

www.vinspired.com

Alternative Options to University:

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

www.studentladder.com

www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

www.allaboutschoolleavers.co.uk