



Trinity Catholic High School

UCAS

**Parents' Guide To Higher
Education
2025-2026**



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Dear Parents/Guardians,

This booklet will be of great assistance in your son/daughter making one of the most important decisions of their lives. I ask you to read it carefully and reflect prudently on the advice it contains. I know you will find it of great help. I wish you and yours every success in reaching the right decision. We at Trinity will do everything we can to assist you.

Best wishes.

Yours faithfully,

Dr P C Doherty OBE
Headmaster



Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are pleased to share with you this *Parents' Guide to Higher Education*, designed specifically to support you in helping your child navigate the university application process with confidence. I know how transformative the experience can be, not just academically, but personally and socially. I also understand how complex and, at times, overwhelming the application journey can feel for both students and families. That's why we've put together this guide: to provide clarity, reassurance, and practical advice as you support your child through this exciting next step.

This guide addresses five key questions to help you understand the journey ahead:

1. What are the main reasons for choosing to go to university?
2. What should be considered when deciding which subject and course to study?
3. How do students choose the right university for them?
4. What are the key components of the application process (e.g. personal statements, UCAS, entry requirements)?
5. What financial factors should families be aware of?

We hope you find the guide informative and reassuring. Applying to university is a significant step, and your support plays a vital role. Please remember that we are here to help both you and your child at every stage. If you have any questions or would like further guidance, do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours faithfully,

Mr D Baker
Director of Sixth Form



Key Reasons for Choosing Higher Education

Explore Your Passions

Dive deeper into subjects you love, gain valuable work experience, and explore opportunities like studying abroad, all while developing confidence and practical skills.

Personal Growth

Experience increased independence, develop essential life skills, and benefit from strong wellbeing and academic support throughout your studies.

Build Lifelong Friendships

Join clubs, sports teams, and campus communities where you can form lasting friendships and valuable networks.

Enhance Career Prospects

Take advantage of placements, internships, and career services that prepare you to enter the job market with confidence and relevant experience. Higher education opens doors to a wide range of career opportunities. In 2024, 67.9% of working-age graduates were in high-skilled employment, compared to 23.7% of non-graduates (Source: DfE).



Develop Critical Thinking

Learn to analyse complex problems, think independently, and adapt to new challenges, skills highly valued by employers.

Gain a Global Perspective

Engage with students from diverse backgrounds and cultures, broadening your understanding of the world and building international connections.

Access Research Opportunities

Collaborate with experts on innovative research projects that prepare you for future academic or professional paths.

Build Leadership and Teamwork Skills

Participate in group projects, societies, and extracurricular activities to develop leadership, collaboration, and communication skills.

Use Top-Quality Facilities

Benefit from modern libraries, specialist equipment, labs, and learning spaces designed to support your academic and practical learning.

Receive Expert Mentoring and Support

Access dedicated staff who provide guidance and support to help you succeed academically, personally, and professionally throughout your university journey.



Higher Earnings

Graduates in the UK earn significantly more than non-graduates. In 2024, the median nominal salary for working-age graduates was £42,000, compared to £30,500 for non-graduates. Postgraduates earned a median salary of £47,000. A study by Universities UK found that, between ages 23 and 31, graduates earned £52,000 more than non-graduates, with earnings increasing at a faster rate after entering employment (Source: DfE).

An analysis by Universities UK of data that tracks earnings from the age of 17 to 31 shows most graduates rapidly catch-up with and overtake non-graduates, despite having fewer years in the labour market, and this difference is sustained throughout their careers. The salary difference increases throughout their careers, even after the costs of studying, and higher taxes, are factored in. Graduates earn more than non-graduates across all regions of the country, where our universities are located. This regional perspective helps take into account local labour markets.

The analysis compared earnings for graduates with contemporaries who held the right qualifications to enter higher education but opted to seek employment instead. The new figures, based on government data linking student and tax records, show that on average:

- Graduates overtake those who chose not to go university within just a few years, earning at least 20% more once they are in their mid-20s. By age 31, graduates typically earn 37% more, and the gap is slightly higher (38%) for those from economically deprived areas.
- Graduate earnings increase at a faster rate than those of non graduates. Between the ages of 23 and 31 average earnings grow by 72% for graduates compared to 31% for non graduates. For those who were previously on Free School Meals average graduate earnings growth is 75% compared to 26% for non graduates.
- Graduates aged over thirty are more likely to be in work, and far less likely to be claiming benefits, than those without a degree.
- On average for the tax year 2020-21, graduate earnings are higher than earnings for non-graduates in all regions.



A Levels Matter

Many graduate recruiters are very interested in A Levels. Some employers in areas such as finance, accounting and management consultancy even go so far as to state the minimum number of A Level points that are needed in addition to the degree. The obvious advice here is for students to work hard now and to get the best A Level results that they can. Not only will A Level grades impact on their university place they may well influence their future career.

Uncertain about what to do after leaving secondary school?

There is an award-winning website that offers advice on alternatives to the traditional university route. Please visit:

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk



Which Subject and Which Course?

Going to university is a fantastic opportunity to broaden your knowledge, develop new skills, and prepare for your future career. However, choosing the right subject and course can feel overwhelming. It's important to research thoroughly and consider your interests, strengths, and long-term goals. Here are some of the best websites to help you explore and compare university courses:

<https://www.ucas.com/>

The official UK university admissions website. Search for undergraduate courses, compare entry requirements, and access application guidance.

<https://discoveruni.gov.uk/>

A government-backed resource with detailed course information, including student satisfaction ratings, graduate employment outcomes, and average earnings.

<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/>

Created by The Student Room, this site offers university comparisons, student reviews, and insights into what it's really like to study a particular subject.

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>

Ideal for exploring how different degree subjects link to careers. Includes job profiles, industry insights, and postgraduate options.

<https://www.whatuni.com/>

Compare universities and courses based on student reviews, rankings, and useful filters like location and study mode.

<https://targetjobs.co.uk/>

Advice tailored to sixth form students about university choices, career planning, and how to match your interests to the right subject.

<https://coursefindr.co.uk/>

A UK university course search platform that allows students to explore undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, compare universities, and request prospectuses all in one place.



Which subject?

It's important to distinguish between a subject and a course when thinking about higher education. At post-16 level (such as A Levels at Trinity), students study specific subjects, for example, Mathematics, English, Chemistry, or Geography. At university level, these subjects evolve into a broad range of courses, often with specialised or applied focuses. For instance, a student who enjoys A Level Chemistry might explore university courses such as Chemical Engineering, Environmental Chemistry, Forensic Science, Pharmacy, or Toxicology.

Many university courses also offer flexibility in how subjects are studied. Students can:

- Pursue a single honours degree (focused primarily on one subject, with optional modules from other areas), or
- Choose a joint honours degree (studying two subjects equally, such as History and English).

Taking the time to explore the full range of course options and understanding how they relate to your A Level subjects is an important step in making an informed and rewarding higher education choice.

Which course?

Even if you're confident about the subject you want to study, choosing the right course can still be challenging. This is because courses with the same title, such as *English*, can vary significantly between universities. The content, structure, teaching methods, and assessment styles of an English degree (or any subject) are unlikely to be identical across institutions. For example, one university might focus more on literary theory and historical texts, while another emphasises contemporary literature or creative writing. Assessment may be mostly essays in one place, and a mix of coursework and exams elsewhere. Assuming that all courses with the same name are the same would be a mistake. That's why it's essential to look closely at course descriptions, module choices, and assessment methods when comparing universities, even within the same subject area.



Degree 'titles'

A Bachelor's degree, also known as an Honours degree, is the most common type of undergraduate qualification in the UK. It is typically what employers mean when they ask for an "undergraduate" or "first" degree in job descriptions.

You can recognise a Bachelor's degree by titles such as:

- BA (Hons) – Bachelor of Arts
- BSc (Hons) – Bachelor of Science
- BEng (Hons) – Bachelor of Engineering
- LLB (Hons) – Bachelor of Laws

The "(Hons)" stands for *Honours*, which usually indicates a higher level of academic achievement and the inclusion of a substantial final-year project or dissertation. Most Honours degrees are completed over three years, or four years if the course includes an optional placement or sandwich year. Students typically complete 360 credits in total across the duration of the course, spread over core modules, optional modules, and independent work.

Courses and qualifications other than degrees

When people think about higher education, they often focus on full degree courses, but there are several other valuable qualifications available at universities. These include:

- **Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE):** The CertHE is awarded after completing one year of full-time study (or the part-time equivalent) in a variety of subjects. It provides a broad introduction to higher education and can sometimes count towards a full degree.
- **Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE):** The DipHE is typically a two-year course and is broadly



equivalent to the first two years of a bachelor's degree. It is often linked to vocational fields such as Nursing, Social Work, Food and Nutrition, or Music Production. Completing a DipHE may allow progression to the third year of a related degree program.

- **Higher National Diploma (HND):** The HND is a work-related higher education qualification offered by many colleges and universities across a wide range of subjects (over 190 courses from 37 providers). It is designed to prepare students for employment and practical skills. With strong academic performance, an HND can provide entry into the final year of a bachelor's degree program.
- **Foundation Degree:** A Foundation Degree is equivalent to the first two years of a bachelor's degree. It combines academic study with relevant workplace learning, often completed in partnership with an employer. It can be studied full-time or part-time and is designed to equip students with skills directly applicable to specific careers. Graduates may either enter the workforce or progress to the final year of a bachelor's degree.

Subject combinations

If your son or daughter wants to study more than one subject, they may have the option to combine these subjects within a single qualification. However, this depends on the institution and course, so it's important to check carefully, as not all subject combinations are available at every university or college.

Sandwich courses ('thick' and 'thin')

Certain vocational courses, such as Architecture, Engineering, and Surveying, often include a year-long placement in industry as an integral part of the course. This placement is known as a "sandwich" because it is positioned between the penultimate (second-to-last) and final year of a degree or Higher National Diploma (HND).

Depending on the employer and placement, this year is usually full-time and paid. The aim is to give students



valuable hands-on experience in a professional environment related to their field of study, helping them develop practical skills and gain insight into their future career.

There are two main types of sandwich courses:

➤ **‘Thick’ Sandwich Course:**

Typically a four-year undergraduate degree or HND where a full year is spent working in industry between the academic years.

➤ **‘Thin’ Sandwich Course:**

Usually part of a three-year undergraduate degree or HND, where work experience is spread throughout the course in shorter placements, often two six-month placements during the second and third years.

Language courses

With some four-year language courses, students study abroad in their third year. The focus of the year abroad is to learn the language of another country in that country. The year is usually spent working in a school, teaching English. The student is assigned to a teacher who would help throughout the year. If studying two languages, it may be possible to spend six months in each of the two different countries.

UCAS course search

A comprehensive list of available courses can be found on the UCAS website (www.ucas.com). Students can search by subject, qualification type, location, institution, course code, and other specific criteria. The UCAS search tool also offers entry profiles for many courses, providing useful information about the course content and the institution, along with direct links to the university or college websites.



Unifrog

Unifrog is web-based platform we use for our students, which brings into one place every undergraduate university course, apprenticeship, and college course in the UK. It also provides insights into different programs such as School Leaver Programmes, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and includes every college at Oxford and Cambridge. This makes it easy for students to compare and choose the best university courses, apprenticeships or further education courses for them. They can also explore exciting opportunities further afield by looking at English taught undergraduate programmes available in Europe and the USA.

Additionally, the platform helps students successfully apply for these opportunities by writing their personal statement, applications and CVs and guiding them through the process, allowing teachers to give live feedback.

www.unifrog.org



Which University?

“The first principle of choosing a university is to take on board that there is no overall best university, but there may be a very good one for you”.

The Virgin Guide to British Universities

With close to 400 UCAS-affiliated higher education institutions offering tens of thousands of courses, the choice of what to study and where is not an easy one. University league tables, although they do need to be treated with some caution, do offer some very useful information and help in making an informed choice. In addition to ranking universities and courses, many of them also offer useful profiles of individual institutions.

What are league tables?

UK university rankings and league tables are highly competitive tools designed to help you navigate your options. With over 160 higher education institutions across the UK, it's important to gather comprehensive information about where to study and what course to choose before applying.

Whether you're interested in a newer university or a prestigious Russell Group institution, league tables provide a useful overview of how universities perform on a national scale.

For a detailed and reliable overview, the Complete University Guide offers an excellent resource: [The Complete University Guide](#).



Choosing a UK University

University rankings provide a useful starting point for your research, but they are just one piece of the puzzle. When selecting a UK university, consider the following important factors:

- Overall university ranking
- Subject-specific ranking
- Location and surroundings
- Cost of living in the area
- Student satisfaction rates
- Research quality and reputation
- Percentage of international students

While rankings offer helpful insights, they don't capture everything. To gain a complete understanding, it's important to explore each university's strengths in more detail, such as available courses, support services, and accommodation options.

Relying solely on league tables won't guarantee you find the best or most suitable university. Choosing the right course, department, and institution takes time and effort. To make an informed decision, invest time in gathering information from a variety of sources and experiences.

What makes a good university?

Most parents want their child to go to a **'good university'** to do a **'good course'**. But what does this actually mean? The following section might help you support your son/daughter in making an informed choice about what to study and where.



University Groupings/Associations/Affiliations

A helpful way to better understand the UK higher education sector is to explore the various groupings and associations that universities have formed. These groups often represent universities with shared values, missions, or specialisms and can provide insight into what each institution prioritises.

Not all universities belong to a formal group or association, but many do. Visiting the websites of these groups and learning about their aims and member universities can be an excellent way to assess whether a particular university aligns with your son's or daughter's interests and goals.

For a quick overview of UK university groups, you can refer to this guide: [UK University Groups – A Quick Guide](#).

Russell Group Universities

The Russell Group is so called because its original members used to meet informally in the Hotel Russell in Bloomsbury. They formally became The Russell Group in 1994 and took the name of the hotel they used to meet in as their own name. The Russell Group of universities is widely regarded, here and overseas, as comprising the 'leading' universities in the country. Whatever view you take of this it is certainly the case that Russell Group universities are amongst the most competitive/the most difficult to get a place at and it is certainly the case that they attract the most research funding. Today, there are twenty-four universities in the Russell Group. They are:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. University of Birmingham | 13. University of Liverpool |
| 2. Queen Mary, University of London | 14. University of Leeds |
| 3. University of Bristol | 15. University of Nottingham |
| 4. University of Manchester | 16. University of Oxford |
| 5. Cardiff University | 17. University of Glasgow |
| 6. Newcastle University | 18. University of Warwick |
| 7. University of Southampton | 19. University of York |
| 8. Durham University | 20. University of Cambridge |
| 9. University of Edinburgh | 21. University of Sheffield |
| 10. University of Exeter | 22. University College London |



- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 11. Queen's University Belfast | 23. King's College London |
| 12. London School of Economics & Political Science | 24. Imperial College London |

Key factors to consider when choosing a university and course:

1. Quality

Institutions are reviewed periodically by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Reports of these reviews can be found on the Quality Assurance website (www.qaa.ac.uk). You can also find information on teaching quality on the Unistats website (www.unistats.ac.uk) and on the UCAS website (www.ucas.com).

2. Employability of students: will my child get a job at the end of the course?

Higher education institutions in the UK are required to collect and report data on the destinations of their graduates approximately 15 months after they finish their course. This data helps show how many graduates are employed, in further study, or other activities.

Before 2003, this was known as the First Destination Survey (FDS). From 2003 until recently, it was called the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey. Since 2018, the DLHE was replaced by the Graduate Outcomes survey, which collects more detailed information about graduates' employment status and activities.

This information is published by individual universities and departments, and can also be accessed through the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) website at www.hesa.ac.uk.

When reviewing employability data, it is important not only to look at the overall percentage of graduates in work but also to consider the types and levels of jobs they have secured.



3. Course content: What does the course actually cover?

Degree courses with similar titles can vary significantly in what they cover. It's important to carefully review course descriptions to understand the content and structure of each program. Consider whether the course includes the subjects your child is interested in, if it offers relevant work experience opportunities, and how students are assessed throughout the course. This will help ensure the course matches their interests and career goals.

4. Accreditation

Some courses (in particular vocational ones) are accredited by professional bodies such as the Engineering Council or the British Psychological Society or the Broadcast Journalism Training Council. Where relevant, check with the individual institution to find out if the course is accredited or offers any exemption from professional exams.

5. Degree discipline: does degree discipline matter?

Some careers do require the study of a specific degree, e.g. medicine and architecture. If your son/daughter has a specific career in mind encourage him/her to research the most appropriate course of study. However, over 60% of graduate vacancies are for graduates from any degree discipline. For example, with a degree in Geography your son or daughter could go into a wide range of careers including management consultancy, market research analysis and business.

6. Social factors

It is easy to forget, faced with league tables and teaching quality reports, that non-academic and social factors such as the location of the institution as well as its size and facilities, are important considerations in making the right choice. No-one wants their child to spend three or four years living and studying in a place that is simply not right for them. Encourage your child to visit universities so that they can make a truly informed decision. Go with them!



Useful Websites

University websites are full of useful information. Many offer excellent advice about making the best of an application - including what to write in a personal statement or how to impress at interview. Typing '**personal statement**' or '**interview**' (or anything else you're interested in) into the search engine on a university website can often yield very helpful results. I strongly encourage you to try this out for yourself. It's easy, it's fun and it's helpful.

Website	Web Address
Complete University Guide	www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk
Course Finder	https://coursefindr.co.uk/
Year in Industry	http://www.etrust.org.uk
Discover Uni	www.discoveruni.gov.uk
Open Days	www.opendays.com
Taster days and events	www.unitasterdays.com www.mystudentevents.com
Student Finance	www.moneysavingexpert.com
Save the Student	www.savethestudent.org
UCAS	www.ucas.com
Unifrog	www.unifrog.org



Personal Statement 2026 Entry

The personal statement is a key component of your UCAS application, providing an opportunity to present yourself to your chosen universities. It allows you to demonstrate your academic potential, motivation, and suitability for your chosen course, as well as to explain why you deserve an offer of admission.

The personal statement will continue to focus on you and your reasons for wanting to study your chosen course. However, starting from the next admissions cycle, UCAS will structure the statement into three distinct sections to provide clearer guidance for applicants. These sections are based on the following key questions:

- 1. Why do you want to study this course or subject?**
- 2. How have your qualifications and studies helped you prepare for this course or subject?**
- 3. What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?**

The personal statement will remain 4000 characters in length (including spaces), and each question will require a minimum of 350 characters. However, if you've got more to say in one section than another then you have got flexibility within the remaining characters to choose where you use these.

Although you can apply for up to 5 courses on your UCAS application, you can only submit 1 personal statement.

It needs to cover all your course choices.

Working out what to include in your personal statement can feel daunting, but we have put together some tips to help get you started.

1. Why do you want to study this course or subject?

This is your opportunity to demonstrate genuine enthusiasm for your chosen course. Explain what sparked your interest in the subject and highlight one or two specific areas you find particularly fascinating. Discuss these in detail to show your curiosity, engagement, and depth of understanding. Universities want to hear what your thoughts are about your subject and not just a description of something you have read - they want to hear



what you think and not just what you've been told or read. You might want to think about the following questions when writing this section:

- **Why do you like the subject?**
- **What books or articles have you read that have stood out?**
- **Has it prompted you to do more research? If so, what did you find out?**
- **Think about why you want to study the subject**
- **Have you been inspired by someone, a news story, a documentary, or a podcast?**
- **Do you have career aspirations in this area of study?**
- **What interests you about the subject – be specific; rather than saying you enjoy it or are good at it, try to explain the 'why' behind your reasoning.**
- **What do you already know about the subject and what are you looking forward to learning more about?**

If you're applying for a joint honors or combined honors course, you will need to ensure you talk about at least two of the subjects you're interested in studying through the course. A feature of these courses is taking modules from different academic departments, so you will need to show your interest in studying a multidisciplinary course.

2. How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

Universities are interested in finding out what relevant or 'transferrable skills' you are bringing with you from your academic qualifications or studies. You will need to identify which areas have helped prepare you for the specific course you are applying to.

Think about, for example:

- **Have you done projects or essays in this subject at school or college?**
- **Think about who you are as a person; your personality, your strengths, your experiences in life – how do these make you suited to study the subject?**
- **How have you shown an interest in the subject outside of school or college – have you done extra reading, online courses, been part of clubs or competitions?**
- **Your current subjects and grades will be included elsewhere in your application, so try to think about specific things you've learned during your studies that relate to the subject, rather than listing your grades**



and subjects.

- What skills might you need for your chosen course(s)?
- What have you done that evidences you have these skills?
- Have you taken part in any educational challenges or competitions? And what does this demonstrate?
- Have you done any additional reading or research and what did you learn from this?

3. What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

In this section you will be able to talk about other experiences you have had outside of your education and how the ways in which they have prepared you for your course. Universities are aware that not everyone will have had the same opportunities, so they have a list of particular activities they expect you have done. They are not looking for a list of activities, but the detail of why these make you perfect for our course. They are interested in how the rest of your life outside of education has influenced you and what transferrable skills you have gained.

This could be through:

- Have you done any work experience, volunteering, an internship or had a part-time job in this subject area or related? Most job or work experience will give you transferable skills.
- Hobbies, clubs, or outreach activities. Do you have any hobbies you can mention that might relate to your chosen subject? Many hobbies show that you can be motivated outside of school to achieve and succeed in something you are interested in.
- Highlight any achievements outside of school that are relevant to the subject you intend to study at university. These could include extracurricular activities, work experience, independent projects, or competitions that demonstrate your passion and commitment to the field.
- You can talk about your circumstances and how they have shaped you with relevance to the subject.
- Think about how your life and personal experiences have helped make you the person you are today, and how these challenges and experiences can support your application by evidencing essential qualities for certain subjects.
- If you have got ambitions and goals for your life and career, can you express how this subject will help you reach these goals?



Top tips for writing your personal statement

- Research your courses - make sure you understand what they're about so your personal statement can be relevant to your choices.
- Always think about why you are telling something - why are you including it? What does it demonstrate?
- Be specific; use examples and give evidence to support what you're saying.
- You do not need to write a chronological history – instead think about the structure and what you want to feature at the start of each section.
- Avoid using lists - tell us why something you have read or something you have done, rather than providing a long list of things that does not spell out your strengths.
- Ask someone you trust for ideas and feedback - they might think of something you do not!
- Check your spelling and grammar and make sure you proofread. Read your personal statement out loud or ask friends and family to read it for you.
- Do not waste characters! You only have 4000 so do not include things like lists of your qualifications – we can see those in the qualifications section of your application already.
- Do not copy! UCAS has software that will detect if your personal statement has been copied from someone else's and they will let all the universities you have applied to know.
- Do not expect to get it right first time. You will need several drafts before you are happy with it.

If you wish to find more information about new personal statement, please visit dedicated UCAS website

<https://www.ucas.com/applying/applying-to-university/writing-your-personal-statement/the-new-personal-statement-for-2026>



Making an Application to University through UCAS

UCAS Guide for parents

<https://www.ucas.com/discover/advice-for-parents-guardians-and-carers/parent-guardian-and-carer-guide>

It is worth downloading the UCAS guide for parents plus signing up for the monthly parents' newsletter.

Why does my child have to apply to university through UCAS?

UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) is the central organisation responsible for managing applications to most UK universities and colleges. Almost all UK higher education institutions use UCAS to process undergraduate applications, so applying through UCAS is the standard and often the only route for students.

UCAS also manages applications for performing arts courses through a dedicated service called UCAS Conservatoires (previously known as CUKAS). This service handles applications for undergraduate and postgraduate music, dance, drama, and other performance-related courses at a number of UK conservatoires. However, not all conservatoires use this system, some manage their admissions directly.

How to make an application through UCAS

Applications are made electronically. Students must register online and complete the application form via the UCAS website. After registering, they will need our 'Buzzword' to link their application to our centre. Students should search for Trinity Catholic High School, Woodford Green, IG8 0TP. The Buzzword has been sent to students via their school email.

Applicants can make up to five choices (up to four for medicine, dentistry, and veterinary science – although a fifth choice can be made for a different course if they wish).



All five choices are confidential. No university or college can see an applicant's other choices. Choices are listed alphabetically by default, so applicants cannot indicate a preference.

For 2026, **UCAS will charge a one-off fee of £28.95**, payable online by credit or debit card.

Some students may be eligible for a UCAS application fee waiver if they have received government-funded free school meals at any time during the last six years of their secondary education, including their final year. The Sixth Form Team will be available to support eligible students with this process.

For Cambridge University

After submitting your UCAS application, you will need to fill in an additional Cambridge specific application form, a link will be sent to you by email.

UCAS Application

The UCAS application has three structured sections.



Enter a general statement about your school/college/centre.



If applicable, enter any information about extenuating circumstances which may have impacted the applicant's education and achievement.



Outline any other supportive information specific to the applicant and relevant to the course(s) applied for that you think universities/colleges should be aware of.



Section 1 - General Statement

In this section the main focus is on the school. The school will write an overall statement here. They will be identical for all students and appear at the top of all the references.

Section 2 - Extenuating circumstances for the student's educational journey

This section focuses on students extenuating circumstances. Here we let universities know about anything that has affected the student's education or academic achievement. It is optional on UCAS, and should only be filled in when there is relevant information to add.

For example:

The student missed a lot of classes due to an injury and is predicted a B in Math's, but their Math's teacher thinks that they would normally be an 'A' student.

Section 3 – Student Suitability

In this section all focus goes on to the student's suitability for the courses they are applying to and anything special about the student.



Specialist Exams

To get a place on any university course, you are going to have to meet the entry requirements.

These university entry requirements (sometimes referred to as UCAS entry requirements) are effectively a set of boxes that you need to be able to tick. If you meet the required level for each item on the list, you are in the running for a place on the course.

Each university will set these entry requirements for each of its courses; the general idea being that they are set at a level where the university can then feel confident, you will be able to cope with the demands of the course.

Why are entry requirements important?

The entry requirements should be pretty much the first thing you look at when you are researching university courses. You need to meet these requirements in order to get a place on the course, so there is not much point focusing on courses where the requirements are out of reach.

What could an entry requirement be?

There are various types of university entry requirements.

Qualifications

Universities will look closely at what you've studied since your GCSEs (or equivalent), as this is the most up-to-date evidence of your academic ability before starting higher education.

Your grades matter, both the ones you've already achieved and the ones your teachers have predicted. These will form a key part of your application. However, it's not just about the grades themselves. Some universities



and courses have preferences when it comes to the type of qualifications you hold. For example, certain courses may prefer A-levels over BTECs, or require specific subjects at particular grades. Retakes may also be viewed differently by some institutions, so it's worth checking their policies.

Typical qualifications students apply with include:

- A-levels
- BTECs
- T Levels
- Scottish Highers and Advanced Highers
- Welsh Baccalaureate / Baccalaureate Wales
- International Baccalaureate (IB)

What do universities look for other than grades?

The UCAS tariff point

It's really the same thing, but some universities will measure academic performance in terms of UCAS points rather than grades. These points are a way for university staff to measure scores and grades across qualifications, every grade for every included qualification is worth a set number of points; higher grades get higher amounts of points and you need a defined number of points to get on the course.

The UCAS Tariff is a 'scoring' system for entry into Higher Education. It is meant to standardise university entry requirements and conditional offer arrangements across the UK to take account of the range of qualifications now on offer.

Instead of asking for grades, a university might express the offer as a number of points. To help understand how many points a qualification is worth, UCAS has a Tariff Calculator that you can use

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/tariff-calculator>



UCAS points tables

Below is a series of tables with UCAS tariff points associated with the most common qualifications and grades.

A LEVEL GRADE	UCAS TARIFF POINTS
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

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

CORE MATHS	UCAS TARIFF POINTS
A	20
B	16
C	12
D	10
E	6



GCSEs

It's common for GCSEs in English and mathematics to be asked for as part of a university's entry requirements. Most universities will look for at least a 4 (sometimes a 5) at GCSE in these subjects. Specific courses may also ask for minimum grades in certain relevant GCSE subjects, while competitive courses will look for strong GCSE results as an indicator of your academic ability.

Interviews

A few universities – including Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial College London – interview most or all of their applicants. Elsewhere, some subjects are more likely than others to interview applicants. This can vary from one university to another. Where a course receives a high number of eligible applicants, admissions tutors may call you in for an interview. This is so they can meet you and fill in the picture they've painted of you from your personal statement, to help them make their decision.

Auditions

If you're applying to a performing arts course like drama or music, you'll almost certainly need to audition once the university has considered your application. The university will provide some guidance on your audition piece and key things you should demonstrate on the day.

Portfolios

If you're applying to a creative arts course, like fine art or photography, you'll probably need to compile a portfolio of your work, either from work you've completed in school or in your free time. The university will tell you whether you need to simply submit this online, deliver it in person or even present this to a tutor. If you do go to the university, there may also be an interview element, either one-on-one or in a group.



University Admission Tests

For certain courses at some universities, candidates are required to take a special admission test, known as an entry test, in addition to A Levels. Students should check the entry requirements for each course with the relevant university before booking a test. It is very important to know exactly which university admission tests you are required to take, so you don't miss registration and deadline dates.

Some admission tests are only available once a year. Most take place between August and November in the year before you are due to start your studies. Some have registration deadlines that fall before the UCAS application deadline. It is the student's responsibility to register for and sit the test within the required timeframe. Students are advised to be well organised, as test centres can become fully booked quickly. You will need to use the test centre locator to find your nearest test centre.

Some of the key university admission tests are listed below. You should also check the UCAS course search tool to confirm whether the course you are applying for requires an admission test.

[LNAT – National Admissions Test for Law](#)

The Law National Aptitude test helps you understand if Law is the right career path for you, and it helps Universities check that you will be able to succeed on a law course.

[GAMSAT - Graduate Medical School Admissions Test](#)

GAMSAT is used some medical schools for applicants who already have degree level qualifications, applying for Graduate Entry Medicine courses.

[UCAT - University Clinical Aptitude Test](#)

The University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT) is used by many universities to select applicants to their medical and dental degree programmes.



ESAT - Engineering and Science Admissions test

ESAT is used by Imperial College London, University of Cambridge, and UCL for Engineering and Science based subjects.

TMUA - Test of Mathematics for University Admission

TMUA is used by several universities for Mathematics, Economics and Computer Science courses.

New for 2026 Entry: Admissions Tests at University College London (UCL)

In 2025, University Admissions Testing (UAT), in collaboration with Pearson VUE, announced a new admissions test called the **Test of Academic Reasoning for Admissions (TARA)**. UCL has confirmed that it will adopt this test for applicants applying for 2026 entry (with testing taking place in 2025).

The TARA is a **general academic aptitude test** designed to assess skills in critical thinking and problem-solving. It will be required for a range of undergraduate courses across multiple faculties at UCL.

If you are applying to UCL, it is essential to check the **individual course pages** on the university website to confirm whether the TARA is required for your chosen programme. Failure to register for and sit a required test may result in your application being invalidated.

Useful Websites

<https://www.uniadmissions.co.uk/tara/guides/the-basics/>

<https://www.ucas.com/admissions-tests>



Your Responsibility

It is your responsibility to register for your test by the stated deadlines, to familiarise yourself with the test format and rules and to apply for any access arrangements or bursaries in good time.



Book Early

We advise you book your test sitting as early as possible so that you are able to sit at a time convenient to you, at your most local test centre. A test costs £75 for candidates in the UK and Republic of Ireland, and £130 for candidates sitting elsewhere.



UCAS application form (Summary)

The UCAS application form can be summarised as follows:

- 1. Personal details:** Your name, contact details (please use your personal email address not school email) and other information
- 2. Choices:** What do you want to study and where do you want to study it?
- 3. Education:** What qualifications have you got? What are you currently studying?
How did you do in your GCSE exams?
- 4. Personal Statement:** Your Personal Statement is your chance to tell universities and colleges why they should want you as a student. Admissions officers will want to know why you are interested in the courses that you have applied for and what have you done outside of your study/ school for the course/subject that are you interested in, be specific, give examples: listening to podcast, joining open forums or lectures at universities etc. Please remember that most applicants are not interviewed and, in an increasingly competitive process, your Personal Statement will perhaps be your only chance to impress.
- 4. Reference and predicted grades:** What can teachers say about you, your attitude towards learning, your learning progress, and achievements? What results are you likely to obtain?



Financial Matters

Student finance is the official government funding you apply for. It will help you to pay for your higher education and the associated fees, such as tuition and living expenses

Tuition Fees

Most students won't have to pay for tuition fees up front, you can apply for a Tuition Fee Loan to pay your fees.

How much you can get depends on:

- how much your university or college charges
- whether you're studying at a publicly or privately funded university or college
- when you started your course

You could get a Tuition Fee Loan of up to £9,535 if you're studying at an eligible university or college. If you're studying an accelerated degree course, you could get up to £11,440.

For Foundation Years, you could get up to £5,760 or £9,535 depending on your course – [find out more about Foundation Years](#).

If you're not sure if a course qualifies for student finance, check with the university or college.

Eligibility

Whether you can get student finance depends on your:

- personal circumstances
- course
- university or college
- nationality or residency status

How it's paid

You need to register at your university or college before Student Finance England can make your first payment. You'll usually do this in the first week of your course, and you may have to show them your student finance notification of entitlement.

Your Tuition Fee Loan is paid directly to your university or college in three instalments during the academic year.



Bursaries and Scholarships

Scholarships and bursaries provide financial support to students. This money does not need to be paid back.

Bursaries are typically awarded based on financial need or personal circumstances. For example, they may be given to students from low-income households, those who have been in care, or students facing other significant barriers to education. Bursaries aim to help students access and remain in higher education.

Scholarships are usually awarded based on academic excellence, sporting ability, musical talent, or other achievements. They often require an application and are competitive in nature.

Student Loan

Student Loan (Tuition Fee Loan) is available for all full-time UK students, and is designed to cover the full cost of the university tuition fee. It is important to note that not all tuition fees are the same in every region – these vary across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is paid directly to the University you will be attending by the Student Loan Company. The loan is transferred directly to the institution that you are attending.

Useful Websites

[Money and student life](#)

[GOV.UK – Student Finance](#)

Maintenance loan

A maintenance loan means you will receive funding for your day-to-day expenses directly into your bank account. It is a loan, therefore, this money will have to be paid back but only after you start earning above the repayment threshold.



Student Maintenance loans payments are released in three instalments. You should receive your maintenance loan at the start of each term. You need to apply for this for every year of study.

Everyone with a place at university is entitled to a maintenance loan. The amount each person is entitled to depends on four main factors:

- Where the person studies and lives (i.e. at home, in London, anywhere else in the UK).
- Household income.
- Family circumstances (certain circumstances attract more funding).
- What course is being studied (certain courses - for example certain medical, health, social work courses - attract different levels of funding).

You can use the student finance calculator to estimate your Maintenance Loan.

www.gov.uk/student-finance-calculator

Non-repayable Grants

Special Support Grant (England only)

You may be eligible for a Special Support Grant (SSG) if you receive certain means-tested benefits such as:

- Income Support
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit

This grant is non-repayable and is not counted against the amount of Maintenance Loan you can receive. It is often available to:

- Lone parents



- Students with certain disabilities

You will be assessed for the SSG automatically when you apply for student finance.

Student Loan Repayment

Your tuition and maintenance loans are combined into one repayment account after your course.

- Repayments begin from the April after you finish your course, but only if your income is above the repayment threshold.
- For students starting university in England from 1 August 2023, you'll be on Plan 5.
- Under Plan 5, you repay 9% of your income above £25,000 (as of 2025).
- The loan is cancelled 40 years after you become eligible to repay, even if you haven't fully repaid the balance.

Interest on Student Loans

- Interest starts from the day you receive your first loan payment.
- It is calculated daily and added monthly (compound interest).
- Under Plan 5, the interest rate is normally set at the Retail Price Index (RPI) only.

To estimate your repayments and how long they might take, use:

studentloancalculator.co.uk



Deadlines for 2025/2026

An early application to UCAS usually means that offers are finalised early (although there are always some exceptions to this, notably applicants for Medicine who are amongst the first to apply and usually amongst the last to hear). At Trinity we set early deadlines - this is for the students' benefit. The deadlines this year are as follows:

UCAS Deadline

29th April 2025	The UCAS course search tool will start showing 2026 entry courses.
13th May 2025	Undergraduate applications will open for 2026 entry.
2nd September 2025	Applicants can start submitting completed undergraduate applications to UCAS. The reference needs to be completed before the application can be sent to UCAS.
15th October 2025	Applications for Oxford, Cambridge or most courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine/science should arrive at UCAS by 6pm (UK time). The reference needs to be completed before the application can be sent to UCAS.
14th January 2026	Applications for the majority of undergraduate courses should arrive at UCAS by 6pm (UK time) on this day (check course details using the UCAS search tool for the correct deadline). The reference needs to be completed before the application can be sent to UCAS. You can still apply after this date, but most universities/colleges do not guarantee to consider any applications sent after this date and popular courses may fill up quickly.
26th February 2026	Extra starts for eligible applicants. If you have used your five choices and do not have any offers, you may be able to apply for an extra course.
30th June 2026	The final deadline for applications. Applications must arrive at UCAS by 6pm (UK time). Any applications received after this date will be entered into Clearing.
4th July 2026	Last date for applicants to add an Extra choice.
5th July 2026	Clearing opens for eligible applicants.
19th October 2026	The deadline for adding Clearing choices.



Trinity Sixth Form Deadlines

22nd September 2025	All conservatoire applicants must have application ready.
29th September 2025	All early applicants must have applications.
27th October 2025	All other applicants must have application ready.

For information only

Art Foundation application deadline (non-UCAS) - Range of deadlines for individual colleges.
Some UCAS courses March.

Applications for dance, drama, and musical theatre courses may have a different deadline –
check conservatoires' websites for information.

**Deadlines set by institutions can vary. Please check deadlines
regularly and carefully with your Uni/chosen course**