

Guide to Higher Education: Universities, UCAS and Apprenticeships

Thinking about your next steps can be scary.

Whether you're in year 12, just finishing a gap year, or wanting to go to university after years in work, making these decisions can be daunting for all of us. However, it's also really exciting! It's a chance for you to explore your passion, gain independence and take your next steps in your educational journey!

A lot of people decide to go to university after school however this pathway is certainly not the only option and not the best choice for all of us. It's important that you explore all of the pathways available to you.

Speak with your teachers, your friends, your family, your mentor and us here at Arts Emergency! We're all here to support you with these next steps.

In this guide, we hope to provide you with the key details you need to know about universities, UCAS and apprenticeships.





HOW DOES IT WORK?

UCAS is the central application system of all UK universities. You apply on UCAS, track your offers through UCAS and accept your offers through the website. It's basically your go-to place throughout the entire process.

UCAS: Key Facts for 2020/2021 applications

- UCAS stands for the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.
- UCAS is the centralised system for all UK university applications.
- You send one application to (up to) 5 university choices.
- Therefore this should not be personalised to one university in particular.
- Your choices are 'invisible': universities won't be able to see where else you have applied.
- The process is entirely online.
- If you are looking to apply for Oxbridge, you can only apply for Oxford or Cambridge; you can't submit an application for both.
- There is a cost: £20 to submit your application to one university and £25 for up to five universities.

You will need to set up an account with UCAS Apply. This is where your application is stored until it is ready to send off. This will open on 19th May.

Sections of UCAS Apply (your application):	
Section	What?
Personal details	This will include you name, address, DOB etc
Additional information	This is where you can make universities aware of any special requirements, disabilities or illnesses.
Student Finance	This is just to indicate if you will be wanting to apply for student finance (you will apply for this from February 2021)
Choices	This is where you input your 5 university course choices
Education	This is where you input your A levels and your GCSEs, as well as any extra qualifications.
Employment	Here you can include any part time or full time work
Personal statement	The hardest part of your application! Remember you write one personal statement that gets sent to all your choices. We'll send out personal statement guidance in our next newsletter.
Referee details.	Your referee adds your reference and submits the application. Your school will be responsible for doing this. If you are applying independently from a school, you will be able to nominate someone to do this.

When you set up UCAS apply, you will be asked if you are applying through a school or college. For a lot of you, this is how you will apply. You will be asked for a 'buzzword' which will link your application to your school and allow your teacher to check through the application and add your reference. Your tutor/careers lead will be able to provide this.

2019

apply Welcome

[<Log out](#)

Welcome	
Personal details	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Statement	<input type="checkbox"/>
View all details	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pay/Send	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help	
Options/Opsiynau	

Key

- Completed
- In progress
- Not started
- Help

Welcome

Welcome Nick,

Your Personal ID is: **140-031-5703**

Please make a note of this number and keep it handy. You will need to quote this number if you call our Customer Contact Centre.

Need guidance? Watch the video advice below [\[Hide video\]](#).



(Unable to view videos here? You can watch them at www.ucas.com/connect/videos instead)

Verify your email address

Your email address needs to be verified as valid before you send your application to us. Please [click here to verify your email address](#)

Before starting your application, please read through the relevant information below regarding:

- [completing your application](#)
- [applicants applying through a school, college or organisation](#)
- [applicants applying as an individual](#)
- [deadlines for submitting your application](#)

Make sure you make a note of your username and password, as well as your UCAS ID number. This is what universities and UCAS will use to identify you.



What happens next?

University Offers: each uni will respond to your application via UCAS Track.	
Universities will review	Universities will respond with
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal statement • reference • qualifications • admissions test results (if needed) • interview (if needed) • portfolio (if needed) • audition (if needed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconditional offer (you will have the place regardless of meeting conditions) • Conditional offer (you will have a place providing you meet conditions) • Application unsuccessful

Your response! Once you have heard back from all of your university choices it's your turn to make your decisions. You are able to select a response from the following options:

Firm Choice	Normally a university with higher entry requirements. If all conditions are met, you will be placed here on results day.
Insurance Choice	Normally a university with slightly lower entry requirements. You will be placed here if you don't meet your Firm Choice conditions on results day.
Decline	You must decline all other offers.

Make sure you meet the deadline given to you to respond otherwise your offers will be withdrawn.

The screenshot shows the UCAS Track interface for a user named Rebecca. The navigation bar includes 'Track', 'Your choices', 'Your application', 'Your details', 'Help', and 'Contact us'. The main content area displays 'Welcome back Rebecca' and 'Today's date: 13 March 2013'. A progress bar shows the user's current status: 'Waiting for offers' (completed), 'Reply to your offers' (current step), 'Waiting for confirmation', and 'Confirmation of place'. A large purple box highlights the 'Next steps' section, which includes a clock icon and the text: 'Your status: You've received offers from all your choices.' and 'Next steps: Reply to your offers (by 6 June). If you don't reply on time, you'll lose your offers.' To the right, there is a 'Frequently asked questions' section with several placeholder text items.

Other options throughout the UCAS process to be aware of:

UCAS Extra: end Feb 2020 - early July 2020.

You would use Extra if you have had no offers from universities or you have declined them all. Extra allows you to add an extra university choice one at a time via Track. These will then be accepted or declined.

Clearing: Early July to October.

You would go through clearing if you apply after 30th June, if you receive no offers, or don't meet your conditions on results day. You can search course vacancies from 5th July and add one choice via Track. Most universities will set up special clearing phone lines for you to call on results day.

Adjustment: Up to five days in August.

You could use adjustment if you do better than your conditional offer for your firm choice. You can register this in Track to find an alternate course. You have five days to secure a place elsewhere if not, you will be placed with your firm choice.

We will send out more information around these options and what to expect on results day close to the time!



THE APPLICATION TIMELINE!

Most college/sixth form timetables for the UCAS process will look something like this:

19 May 2020: UCAS Undergraduate Apply opens for 2021 entry

May - July: Researching universities and courses

Summer Holidays: Complete first draft of personal statement

September - October 2020: Final draft of personal statement (we will hold a workshop at Arts Emergency HQ for personal statements in September!)

September 2020: Applicants can pay and send their applications to UCAS, and unis and colleges can start making decisions on applications

15 October 2020: Applications for Oxford, Cambridge or most courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine/science should arrive at UCAS by 18:00 (UK time)

15 January 2020: UCAS deadline. Final chance to submit applications before equal consideration closes

End February 2021: Extra starts for eligible applicants

Early July 2021: Last date for applicants to add an Extra choice

Thursday 12th August 2021: A level results day

RESEARCHING COURSES

With so many courses out there, how do you go about choosing your five options?! Here are some questions you may like to ask yourself when you're doing your research.

- What subjects am I passionate about?
- What will I want to study for three years?
- Do I know what I want to do as a career? Do I need a certain qualification for this?
- Do I want to be in a city?
- Do I want to be close to home?
- What does the course cover? (courses with the same name can still be very different!)
- What are the core modules and what are the optional modules?
- How is the course taught?
- How is the course assessed?
- What grades am I realistically on track to achieve?



APPRENTICESHIPS

What is an apprenticeship?

Work while you study – an apprenticeship is a way to gain the skills, knowledge and experience you need to get into many careers. They combine work, training, and study, letting you 'earn while you learn'.

There are many different apprenticeships available across a wide range of industries, and for a wide variety of job roles. As a paid employee, each apprentice works alongside their studies. There are no student fees – your training costs are funded by the government and your employer.

It's an ideal option if you have a clear idea of the career path you want to follow, providing you with practical, on-the-job training, and classroom-based instruction.

Similarly to jobs, there are often only one or two apprenticeship positions available and so it is a much more competitive process than getting a university place.

Apprenticeships are offered from level 2 - 7. Below shows the equivalent qualification at university. It's important that you find the correct level for you.

Name	Level	Equivalent Educational Level
Intermediate	2	GCSE
Advanced	3	A Level
Higher	4,5, 6 and 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

There are plenty of apprenticeships out there however there aren't apprenticeships available that support all avenues of the creative industries at the moment. Therefore it's important to do your research into the available options.

Current apprenticeships are in areas such as advertising and media, visual effects, broadcasting, digital arts, culture and heritage, design, and marketing. However, new apprenticeships are in development every year and so it is always worth doing research in your preferred area to see if anything has been created.

Below are a list of links that are useful to use when searching for apprenticeships:

- <https://www.ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk/search?programme=3&show=jobs>
- https://artswork.org.uk/our-work-with-young-people/creative-apprenticeships/?gclid=EAlalQobChMIu6CfijC65gIVCuR3Ch0IRAh9EAAYAyAAEgJKJfD_BwE
- <http://www.apprenticeshipguide.co.uk/apprenticeship-by-skills-interests/creative-apprenticeships/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>
- <https://whitehat.org.uk><https://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/>



WHERE TO START?

You've just taken in a LOT of information and we're sure you've read a lot more from other sources too.

The best thing to do at this stage is research. There's no looming deadline so use this time to investigate your options and speak to people about your thoughts.

Remember there's no right or wrong path to take and no 'right' course to choose. It's a completely personal choice.

Here are things you may like to do/sites you may like to look at to help you with these decision.

- Have a think about what style of learning suits you. Would you like to gain a qualification through university or an apprenticeship.
- Brainstorm areas and subjects you are interested in.
- Look up which universities offer these subjects.
- Order/download prospectuses from universities.
- Visit open days! (Many unis are currently holding virtual open days due to Covid-19.
- Have a look at what apprenticeships are currently available. Do any of them appeal to you?
- Speak to your teachers, your friends, your family, your mentor, and us at AE! Ask us about our pathways and our experiences.
- Visit the Arts Emergency Tumblr page for more links and advice!