

A parent guide to...UCAS

UCAS is a charity that processes applications to study full-time courses at universities, colleges, and conservatoires in the UK. However, it's not just about processing applications – UCAS' aim is to help students make informed choices that are right for them, by guiding them through the entire higher education application process and beyond. To support this, UCAS provides a wide range of valuable information and services for applicants, their parents, and teachers.

Your son or daughter can use www.ucas.com to find out how to get started, research their options, make their application, and track its progress. There's information especially for you at www.ucas.com/parents, including details of the application process, a host of helpful video guides, and a link to sign up for our monthly parent newsletters.

Key dates for 2019 entry

5 September 2018	UCAS opens for 2019 entry
15 October 2018	Deadline for Oxford and Cambridge applications, and for most courses in medicine, veterinary medicine/science, and dentistry
15 January 2019	Deadline for the majority of undergraduate courses
2 May 2019	University/college decisions due on applications submitted by 15 January
15 August 2019	A Level results day
20 September 2019	Final deadline for applications to courses in 2019

Tuition fees

Your son or daughter will typically pay up to £9,250 (as at March 2018) per year in tuition fees as a UK student, though for many courses it's less, with the average at around £8,500. Fees don't need to be paid upfront. Students can apply for a tuition fee loan to cover all or part of their fees.

Living costs

The second loan they can apply for is the maintenance loan, to help towards living expenses while at university, such as accommodation, food, and course materials. The amount they're eligible to borrow depends on several factors, including where they will be studying and your household income.

Repayment

Importantly, this isn't based on how much your child has borrowed, but instead on how much they go on to earn. Currently, the earnings threshold is set at £21,000. This is the point at which they'll begin to pay back an amount, currently 9%, based on what they're earning over that figure per year. For example, if your son or daughter earned £22,000 then he/she would pay 9% on the £1,000 over the £21,000 threshold. Earning less than that? Then they won't pay anything back.

The UCAS Tariff

The Tariff provides a fair and more transparent process of allocating Tariff points across a wide range of qualifications. Currently one third of courses on the UCAS search tool have a Tariff entry requirement. Students should always check individual course requirements, ensuring that they also have the GCSE qualifications for their chosen courses. UCAS has a useful Tariff calculator www.ucas.com/ucas/tariff-calculator. Any queries related to the Tariff points for BTEC and Cambridge Technical courses should be directed to UCAS (0371 4680 468) to ensure that the correct Tariff is used.

Clearing

Clearing is a chance for students to look for a place if they don't have one after they get their exam results. It's also the final chance for universities to fill any places they still have available. To look for a Clearing place, your son or daughter must be eligible. This means that either:

- they have no offers
- their firm and insurance choices have made them unsuccessful
- they applied after the qualifying date

To find out more, go to www.ucas.com/clearing.

Adjustment

If your son or daughter's results are better than expected, they might exceed the conditions of their firm choice. In this situation, they may wish to look at Adjustment to find an alternative course. For more information, go to www.ucas.com/adjustment.

Useful links

For further key dates - www.ucas.com/key-dates

To find undergraduate courses – www.ucas.com/search

Which? University offers independent information on universities - www.which.co.uk/university

For guidance, inside tips and advice from current undergraduate students - www.which.co.uk/universityadvice

Take a look at a university from the comfort of home - www.ucas.com/virtual-tours

For information on university open days - www.ucas.com/opendays

Some universities offer taster courses - www.ucas.com/taster-courses

How to complete the UCAS application - www.ucas.com/fillinginyourapplication

Writing a personal statement - www.ucas.com/personalstatement

Student Finance - www.gov.uk/studentfinance

Alternatives to university

If university isn't the answer (or at least not right now) there are other options to consider.

Apprenticeships – on-the-job experience and training for a whole range of career paths, including finance, retail, IT, and childcare.

The world of work – get your child to develop their CV, check out job ads, and speak with recruiters to get a sense of different job markets, including school leaver programmes.

Deferred entry to university – spend time gaining work experience or completing a gap year to build up skills, knowledge, and confidence before higher education.