



**Year 12**

# **Applying To Higher Education**

**June 2025**



# Applying to Higher Education

## Undergraduate Qualifications:

- Bachelor's Degree (BSc, BA, BEd, BPhil, etc.). This typically takes three years to complete.
- Higher National Diploma (HND). Designed to prepare students for a specific career. This typically takes two years to complete.
- Foundation Year/Degree (FdA, FdSc, FdEng, etc.). This is a one or two year course designed to lead onto a Bachelor's Degree. Students may choose this route if they think they may not obtain the grades needed for a Bachelor's Degree or did not study a required A Level subject.
- In some cases, students can also apply for a four year Master's Degree (MA, MSc). This includes the postgraduate Master's qualification in the fourth year.

## Making Applications

Nearly all the courses at universities, colleges and institutes of higher education are part of UCAS (*Universities and Colleges Admissions Service*). There is a single online application form which, for courses starting in Sept 2026, is submitted in Year 13. The applicant is given up to five choices and at the time of application makes no preference between them. However, by June of Year 13, the student must reduce the offers received to a maximum of two (one firm and one insurance choice).

- (a) Art and design degrees can be applied to via UCAS, however, nearly all students who go on to such colleges take a Level 3 Art Foundation course first. Most of these foundation courses (available via FE colleges) have their own separate application procedures. Some universities have their own foundation courses, but these will charge a fee.
- (b) Some traditional music, musical theatre and drama degrees have a separate online application system called **UCAS Conservatoires** ([www.ucas.com/conservatoires](http://www.ucas.com/conservatoires)). Here applicants are given up to six choices with a much earlier deadline. Applicants need two references (school and practical) and need to manage the application themselves as, unlike the standard UCAS process, the school cannot access their application.
- (c) Some drama schools have their own application systems external to UCAS.

## Typical Offers

The following are examples of offers made by universities for 2025 entry. It's important to note that high entry grades do not necessarily guarantee quality as on popular courses they are often used as a way of sifting high numbers of applicants.

- BSc Accountancy (Cardiff University): AAB from any 3 A levels or 2 A Levels plus a Distinction in CTEC Business. One grade lower for those with a Grade A in the EPQ.
- BA History (Bristol University): AAA, including History A Level. In 2025 Backwell students were eligible for a contextual offer for some courses at Bristol.
- BA Business and Management (UWE Bristol): 112 UCAS Tariff points. GCSE Level 4 in Maths and English Language also required.
- BSc Environmental Science (University of South Wales): BCC to include a Science (including Geography and Maths) or 104-UCAS Tariff points.
- BEng Civil Engineering (Exeter University): AAB-ABB: including A Level Maths and a Science (both Grade B).

## Specific University/Course Information

### Teaching:

There are two main ways of qualifying to teach via Higher Education institutions:

Route 1          BEd degree – sometimes also called (QTS).

Route 2          Subject degree followed by one year of post-graduate training (PGCE).

For details on qualifications required to teach see:

<https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/train-to-be-a-teacher/qualifications-you-need-to-teach>

### Art/Music/Dance:

The quality of portfolio/audition and interview may count more than A level grades/tariff points.

### Oxford/Cambridge:

Applicants apply to a specific college or choose to make an 'open application'. Colleges usually make offers in terms of A level grades and often have pre-interview exams and/or ask for samples of work to be submitted, so it is important that students are aware of these requirements. Nearly all colleges will interview applicants.

### Medicine/Dentistry/Veterinary Science

Applicants can apply for up to four courses in medicine/dentistry/veterinary. The fifth choice must be a different course, although it could be closely related.

### Entry Deadlines

Course	Deadline
Conservatoires (music courses)	2 October 2025
Foundation degrees, Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre Schools	See the course websites. Could be any time from September 2025 onwards.
Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science	15 October 2025
Oxford and Cambridge	15 October 2025
Equal consideration for all other undergraduate courses via the UCAS system	14 January 2026

## Extra Tests/Exams

Some universities / courses require applicants to take additional tests, many of which incur a fee.

- Applicants for Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science may be required to take the UCAT (University Clinical Aptitude Test), which is sat at regional centres between July and September 2025. Applicants will need to register for the UCAT themselves. This test is extremely rigorous and students are recommended to seek advice from the assessment website on how to revise.
- Applicants for Law at some universities are required to take the LNAT (National Aptitude Test for Law). Registration for the test opens in August 2025 and the test can be taken from September 2025. Oxford and Cambridge candidates will have an earlier deadline of 15 October 2025 for completion of the test than those applying to other universities.
- Highly selective universities may have additional entry tests for certain subjects, such as the HAT (History Aptitude Test), MAT (Maths Aptitude Test) and PAT (Physics Aptitude Test). Students will need check requirements and book these tests themselves.

**For more information on tests go to**

[www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/admissions-tests](https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/admissions-tests)

## Deferring Entry/Taking A Gap Year:

Deferred entry (i.e. applying for 2027 entry) is possible for most university courses. There is no list of these courses so it's best to call the universities to check. Students apply via UCAS as normal in Year 13 and select '2027' entry on the UCAS application.

Alternatively, students could wait and apply in the next application cycle (from September 2026). This method has the advantages of allowing the student longer to decide what to apply for and to target universities in the knowledge of grades achieved. The student would still need to let the school know their intentions in plenty of time before the deadline so we can still check their application and write their reference.

# Making An Application

Students make their application via the UCAS Hub at <https://www.ucas.com/>. **All students are given a UCAS Guide during Future Plans Week in Term 6** which explains in detail how to complete the application form, including a “buzzword”, which will be entered during the registration process. Students are advised to wait until Future Plans Week to apply, although they can start to research courses, subjects and requirements as soon as possible.

## Making Choices

We advise students to apply to institutions with a range of entry requirements, both aspirational, realistic and insurance in terms of their predicted grades. This will give them the most flexible options when they come to choose their firm and insurance choices.

Students should research their choices as thoroughly as possible through online prospectuses, higher education fairs, open days and/or taster courses. They can also find and compare information on degree courses on the UCAS website and Discover Uni (<https://discoveruni.gov.uk>). As well as entry requirements students should compare optional modules available, the mix of exams and coursework and contact hours as well as opportunities for work placement or year abroad. All institutions are required to give details of graduate destinations for each course.

## Personal Statement

As part of the UCAS application students are required to write a personal statement which consists of answering 3 questions:

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

This is the applicant’s opportunity to let the course admissions staff know why they have chosen that course and why they would be a successful student. It is very important that lots of time is taken to prepare this statement.

Once the student has completed the whole application and paid the fee to UCAS (£28.95), it will be checked by a member of the sixth form team who will then compile and upload their school reference (written by their subject teachers and tutor). The school will then send the application to UCAS. The deadline for the majority of courses for equal consideration is 14 January 2026, although the school will ask for applications to be completed by 7 November 2025 to allow for checking and writing references. See last page for timings/deadlines.

## What happens next?

The student will receive an email from UCAS to state that the application has been received and sent onto the universities. The student will then use the UCAS Hub to check for offers and conditions. Invitations to interviews, extra requirements and applicant open days will be sent directly to the student, **so it is important that they regularly check the email address given on their application, including their Junk Mail folder.**

Each institution will consider the application against their own admissions criteria, so the students will hear from them at different times – they may be contacted within a very short period of time after applying or it may be some months before they hear anything. Once they have heard from all their choices, they will need to choose one ‘firm’ choice and one ‘insurance’ choice. The deadline for this is either 6 May 2026 or 6 June 2026, depending on when the student has heard back from all their choices.

### **UCAS Extra**

If all the student’s choices are declined or they decide to withdraw their application from those choices, they can take up ‘UCAS Extra’. This allows the student to apply to one more course. They will need to contact the university first to check if there are spaces on the course and that they are happy to accept their application.

## **Offers**

### **Conditional Offers**

Most universities will make the student a conditional offer based on exam results. This offer could be in the form of grades or UCAS tariff points (see the table on the next page). The benefit of UCAS tariff points is that they take into account other Level 3 courses such as AS Levels and EPQ. Some courses will also include points from achievements such as music, dance and vocational awards.

### **Unconditional Offers**

An unconditional offer means that the institution is sure that the student will be successful on the course or that they have passed the interview/audition/portfolio requirements and therefore specific exam results are not necessary. Despite this, we advise students as to the importance of continuing to do their best in their exams as many graduate employers look at A Level/CTEC results as well as degree results.

In some cases, the institution may make an unconditional offer only if the student agrees to make that course their ‘firm’ (i.e. first choice). In this case it is important that the student speaks to one of the sixth form team to talk it through.

### **CTEC Subjects**

Some courses asking for grades do not specify on their websites whether they accept CTEC subjects as part of their offer. Although the vast majority do, it is always best to contact the university admissions department to check.

# Tariff Points

A Level	
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

AS Level	
A	20
B	16
C	12
D	10
E	6

Extended Project	
A*	28
A	24
B	20
C	16
D	12
E	8

OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate		Business Studies
OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate		Health and Social Care
D*	56	
D	48	
M	32	
P	16	

Music Performance				Music Theory			
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8		Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
D	12	16	30	D	6	8	10
M	10	14	24	M	5	7	9
P	8	12	18	P	4	6	8

National Pool Lifeguard Qualification	
NPLQ	8 points



# Student Finance

Tuition fees can vary even for similar courses, so it is important to check this on the course information webpages. The maximum fees for courses starting in 2026 is £9,535 per year.

## Tuition Fee Loans

There is a loan available from Student Finance England to cover each year's tuition fee. Students will need to apply for this loan by end of May in the year before they start the course (i.e. May 2026 for September 2026 start). The loan will be paid directly to the institution, and students are required to pay it back (plus interest) when they are earning above a certain level. See [www.gov.uk/student-finance](https://www.gov.uk/student-finance) for details.

## Maintenance Loans

Students may also qualify for an additional Maintenance Loan to help with living costs. This loan is paid directly to the student at the start of each term (or monthly if they study in Scotland) and students are required to pay it back (plus interest) when they are earning above a certain level. See [www.gov.uk/student-finance](https://www.gov.uk/student-finance) for details.

## Additional Funding

Further financial support is available in the form of bursaries, scholarships and other support, which usually does not need to be paid back. Amounts vary across different courses and locations and can be offered for a variety of reasons, including course type, applicant background, academic/creative ability, or exam results. See <https://www.thescholarshipclub.org.uk> for details.

# Applying To Non-UK Institutions

The Higher Education sector can differ widely from country to country in terms of entry requirements, how offers are made and visa requirements/timescales, so the student will need start researching this as soon as possible. For specific advice, see **Unifrog** to search and shortlist US, European and Canadian universities, as well as numerous 'Know-How' guides to studying in these and other countries, including those in Asia and Australia. If transcripts and school references are required, the student will need to let the Sixth Form Team know as soon as possible as these applications can be complex.

## What Next...

- Research courses and institutions. Narrow down to one subject (or two for joint honour degrees) and look at a range of course entry requirements.
- Speak to teachers regarding predicted grades. Be realistic – they have experience of predicting grades so listen to their advice.
- Using the UCAS Guide (available from 23 June) start to fill in the online application forms for UCAS, UCAS Conservatoires or private institutions.
- Investigate the financial implications of Higher Education.
- Read around the chosen subject and, if applying to a vocational (career specific) course, gain some relevant work experience. These experiences are important for the personal statement.
- Speak to the Sixth Form Team if unsure about any aspects of applying to Higher Education.
- Remember that students can apply to apprenticeships at the same time as university. See the Post-18 (non HE) booklet for details.

# HE Application Cycle – Summary

	Action	Timings
1	Applications are submitted. For the vast majority of HE courses, students use the <b>standard UCAS</b> application system where they apply for up to 5 courses. In addition, they can apply for up to 6 conservatoire (specialist music/performing arts) courses via the <b>UCAS Conservatoire</b> system. In addition to this, they can apply to <b>universities abroad</b> and/or any number of <b>private institutions</b> or non UCAS HE courses (such as foundation degrees and private drama/music schools).	The <u>final deadline</u> for applications via <b>UCAS Conservatoires</b> is 2 October 2025 so students will need to discuss their application/references with school as soon as possible and definitely by the start of Year 13. For the <b>standard UCAS</b> system the deadline to submit the application to school is 22 September 2025 for ‘early application’ courses (medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, Oxford, Cambridge) and 7 November 2025 for all other courses. The <u>final deadline</u> to send to UCAS is 15 October 2025 for ‘early application’ courses and 14 January 2026 for all other courses. Universities abroad and private institutions have their own deadlines.
2	Interviews/auditions/exams take place (if required)	Extra tests/exams needed for a few courses (e.g. medicine) take place in August 2025, but the vast majority of these, interviews and auditions take place between September 2025 and January 2026. See course websites for details.
3	The institutions either make an offer or decline the application	Any time after the application is made. Most will have replied by the end of March 2026, but some may not reply until the end of May 2026.
4	If all UCAS choices are declined, the applicant can use ‘UCAS Extra’ to make one more choice	‘UCAS Extra’ opens on 26 February 2026 and runs until 4 July 2026.
5	When all the UCAS choices have replied, the applicant decides whether to keep:	If all courses have replied by 31 March 2026, this needs to be done by 6 May 2026.
	a a single unconditional firm offer, <b>or</b>	If all choices have replied by 14 May 2026, this needs to be done by 6 June 2026.
	b one conditional firm offer and one conditional insurance offer, <b>or</b>	
	c decline them all and apply for a new choice via ‘UCAS Extra’ or later via ‘Clearing’	
6	Exam Results are published	August 2026
7	The place is confirmed depending on the conditions of the offer. If the applicant is unsuccessful in both firm and insurance choices, they can apply for a new choice via ‘Clearing’.	‘Clearing’ runs up until the end of September 2026.

